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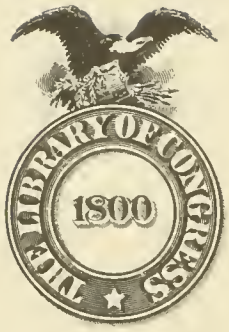
MATTHEWS

UNCLE SAM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UNCLE SAM

BY

ALBERT MATTHEWS

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UNCLE SAM.

BY ALBERT MATTHEWS.

Arising in obscure ways, often originating in derision or abuse or satire, sometimes repudiated by those to whom they are applied, at other times adopted in spite of the ridicule, the origin of nicknames is singularly elusive, and there are few words or phrases of which it is more difficult to trace the history. Moreover, nicknames are almost invariably associated in the popular mind with some person or place or thing having a similar name; and so a problem already difficult is made doubly so by the necessity of attempting to obtain information about very obscure persons. The history of nicknames usually follows one general course: those who, at the time of origin, perhaps know the real explanation, fail to record it, and then, a generation or so having passed by and the true origin having been forgotten, a series of guesses is indulged in.

In Yankee, Brother Jonathan, and Uncle Sam, we Americans have perhaps more than our fair share of national sobriquets; and we are, so far as I am aware, the only nation to the government of which a sobriquet has been given in distinction from the people. For while Uncle Sam has occasionally been applied to us as a nation, its use is almost wholly restricted to our government. What has been said above about the popular tendency to connect nicknames with persons is well illustrated in all of our national sobriquets. When the history of Yankee comes to be written, it will be found necessary to consider a famous pirate who was the terror of the Spanish Main in the seventeenth century; a negro who lived in South Carolina in 1725; several members of a family which was well known in Cambridge, Massachusetts, during the eighteenth century; the Yankoos,

an imaginary tribe of Indians invented in 1775 for the purpose of explaining a word which then first came into general use in this country; and Yankee as a family name. The history of Brother Jonâthan involves an inquiry into an alleged English poet of the seventeenth century; a London coffee-house of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries named Jonathan's; Jonathan Hastings, a tanner who lived in Cambridge early in the eighteenth century; Jonathan Carver, the noted traveller; and Jonathan Trumbull, the distinguished Governor of Connecticut.[1] And in Uncle Sam we are confronted with a similar problem—this time an alleged contractor and inspector named Samuel Wilson, who lived in Troy during the first half of the nineteenth century. The story connecting Uncle Sam with Samuel Wilson first appeared in print, so far as is known, in 1842, and no example of the term earlier than 1840 has until now ever been cited.[2]

Before considering the Samuel Wilson story, let us see what the history of the term Uncle Sam has actually been. For sixty-six years the statement has been repeated that the nickname arose at the outbreak of the war of 1812, varied occasionally by the assertion that the term originated during the Revolutionary War. Both statements are incorrect, as the term is not known to have been used until the war of 1812 was half over; but the nickname certainly did originate during that war.[3] Moreover, for a year or so

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[1] See Brother Jonathan, Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, VII, 94–122.

[2] "She was called Catalina, and, like all other vessels in that trade, except the Ayacucho, her papers and colors were from Uncle Sam" (Two Years before the Mast, 1841, p. 168). This extract is quoted in Farmer and Henley's Slang and its Analogues (1904), where it is dated 1835. The preface to Dana's book is dated July, 1840. Uncle Sam was first recognized in 1848 in Bartlett's Dictionary of Americanisms, whence it found its way into the 1860 edition of Worcester and into subsequent dictionaries.

[3] The term does not appear in the following books, where, if known at all or in general use, it would be certain to turn up: J. K. Paulding, The Diverting History of John Bull and Brother Jonathan, by Hector Bull-us, 1812; The Beauties of Brother Bull-us, by his loving Sister Bull-a, 1812 (a reply to Paulding's book); W. Dunlap, Yankee Chronology, 1812; The Wars of the Gulls, 1812; Paulding, The United States and England, 1814; The Reviewers Reviewed, 1815; D. Humphrey, The Yankey in England, 1815. The first appearance of the term in a book was in The Adventures of Uncle Sam, 1816. See p. 40, below. Besides these books, political skits (written largely in Biblical language) were not uncommon in the

it was avoided by those who favored the war, and was employed only by those who opposed the war. Hence the term was at first apparently used somewhat derisively. In order to understand how this could have been the case, it will be necessary to glance at some of the manifestations of the war.

We are all so familiar with the causes, events, and consequences of the war of 1812, that it is unnecessary to dwell upon them here; yet some passages from contemporary newspapers will perhaps give us a more vivid impression of the thoughts and feelings engendered by that contest than will the formal writings of learned historians. An editorial note headed with the historic words "Era of Good Feelings," which appeared in the *Columbian Centinel* of July 12, 1817, began as follows: "During the late Presidential Jubilee many persons have met at festive boards, in pleasant converse, whom party politics had long severed. We recur with pleasure to all the circumstances which attended the demonstrations of good feelings" (p. 2–3). To us of the present day, who take our politics more calmly, it is not easy to understand the furor and turmoil which characterized the war of 1812. But if political warfare nowadays is less abusive and vituperative than it was a century ago, as is certainly the case, yet also it is distinctly less picturesque. Is it possible that in the matter of nicknames, we Americans have lost our inventive capacity? What has there been in the past decade to match "Father of his Country," "Old Hickory," "Mill Boy of the Slashes," "Old Man Eloquent," "Tippecanoe," "Old Bullion," "Rail-splitter," "Plumed Knight," and scores of other sobriquets that will readily occur to all? It is true that the nicknames which were so commonly bestowed during the war of 1812 were chiefly satirical; but on that very account they are the more valuable for our present purpose.

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newspapers. See *Columbian Centinel* (Boston), November 7, 1812, p. 1–3; *The Yankee* (Boston), August 13, 1813, p. 2–2; *Portsmouth Oracle*, February 26, 1814, p. 3–1; *Columbian Centinel*, March 2, 1814, p. 1–2. While John Bull, Brother Jonathan, and John Codline (that is, New Englanders) figure in these skits, there is no allusion to Uncle Sam. It may be added that in his Jonathan Bull and Mary Bull, written in 1821, Madison makes no mention of Uncle Sam.

In a speech delivered in Congress on January 24, 1812, David R. Williams said: "Sir, I feel a deadly hate against Great Britain. Yes, sir, if the red artillery of Heaven were in my hands, I'd soon drive the fast anchored isle from her moorings."[4] Immediately Williams was nicknamed "Mr. Thunderbolt Williams," "thunder-and-lightning Williams," "Jupiter Williams," "thunder & lightning David;" and his words lingered in the popular mind for fourteen years at least.[5] War with England was declared June 18, 1812. In a proclamation dated June 26, Governor Caleb Strong of Massachusetts spoke of "the nation from which we are descended, and which for many generations has been the bulwark of the religion we profess."[6] At once "the bulwark of our religion" and "Bulwark Strong" became bywords in the war papers.[7] In a speech delivered in Congress on January 5, 1813, Josiah Quincy said:

"An armistice was proposed by them. It was refused by us. It was acceded to by the American general, on the frontiers. It was rejected by the cabinet.....They renewed hostilities. They rushed upon Canada. Nothing would satisfy them but blood. The language of their conduct is that of the giant, in the legends of infancy.

Fee, Faw, Foo, Fum,
I smell the blood of an Englishman,
Dead, or alive, I will have some."[8]

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[4] View of the State of Parties in the United States (second edition, 1812), p. 159. The author of this work gives January 21, as the date of Williams's speech. The true date is January 24. See the *Connecticut Courant* of February 5, 1812, p. 2–3.

[5] See *Connecticut Courant*, January 12, 1813, p. 3–4; *Portsmouth Oracle*, *June* 26, 1813, p. 2–5; *Columbian Centinel*, August 7, 1813, p. 2–4; *New York Herald*, August 31, 1814, p. 1–5; The Yankee in London, 1826, p. 96. "General David R. Williams," said the *Portsmouth Oracle* of January 8, 1814, "commonly called thunder and lightning David, has resigned his command, without sinking the fast anchored island" (p. 4–1). In the *Lansingburgh Gazette* of December 27, 1814, appeared the following: " 'Thunder & lightning' Williams, formerly a member of Congress, and lately for about a month a brigadier-general, is elected Governor of South Carolina" (p. 3–3).

[6] *New England Palladium*, June 30, 1812, p.1.

[7] Even as late as March 15, 1823, the expression was still remembered. See *Niles' Register* of that date, XXIV, 32.

[8] *Columbian Centinel*, February 3, 1813, p. 2–1. See also Quincy's Speeches delivered in the Congress of the United States (1874),pp. 389, 390. In Harper's Encyclopædia of United States History (1902) will be found reproduced a caricature of Quincy, described as follows:

"In one caricature he was called 'Josiah the First,' and had upon his breast, as the decoration of an order, crossed codfishes, in allusion to his persistent defence

The man who later was commemorated by Lowell in an essay entitled "A Great Public Character," was, during the war of 1812, known as "Mr. Fum"[9] or "Orator Fum,"[10] and we read of "the degrading doctrine inculcated by *'fee, fo, fi, fum'* federalists."[11] John Adams was "Duke of Braintree"[12] and "Old Brimborion."[13] John Armstrong, who was made Secretary of War in January, 1813, was nicknamed "Duke of Newburgh," in allusion to the famous Newburgh Addresses of 1783.[14] Jefferson was called "Tall

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of the New England fisheries. He was also called 'King' because of his political domination in New England. In the caricature his coat was scarlet, his waistcoat brown, his breeches light green, and his stockings white. In a space near the head, in the original, were the words, 'I, Josiah the First, do, by this royal proclamation, announce myself King of New England, Nova Scotia, and Passamaquoddy, Grand Master of the noble order of the Two Codfishes' " (VII, 358).

[9] *Military Monitor* (New York), July 12, 1813, I, 363.

[10] *Aurora* (Philadelphia), October 25, 1813, p. 2–3. The following toast was given at Passyunk in 1813: "Governor Strong and Orator Fum—two peas of a pod. 3 Groans!" (*Aurora*, July 12, 1813, p. 2–5).

[11] *Independent Chronicle* (Boston), September 30, 1813, p. 2–3. In connection with Quincy, it is perhaps worth while to quote the following, for the sake of what is apparently an unrecorded use of the term hand organ: "THE *Virginia Argus* —one of Mr. MADISON's hand organs—calls upon the Federalists of the North to abandon QUINCY" (*Columbian Centinel*, August 29, 1812, p. 1–5).

[12] *Columbian Centinel*, November 4, 1812, p. 2–4.

[13] *Columbian Centinel*, October 28, 1812, p. 1–4.

[14] The two anonymous Addresses or Letters, as they are sometimes called, written in March, 1783, will be found in A Collection of Papers, relative to Half-Pay and Commutation of Half-Pay, Granted by Congress to the Officers of the Army, Fish-Kill, 1783, pp. 16-21.

In the *Columbian Centinel* of July 22, 1812, "Brutus" asked: "As a friend to liberty and republicanism, I wish to inquire whether Mr. *Armstrong* lately made a Brigadier General in our army by President *Madison*, is the same man, who has been supposed to have written the letters to the army in 1783, advising them to retain their arms, till they had forced the civil authorities to comply with their demands, and compensated themselves by plundering the innocent and defenceless citizens?" (p. 2–3). In the *New York Herald* of January 20, 1813, is the following: "*New Secretary at War.*—Gen. Armstrong's appointment has passed the Senate by a majority of three. Yesterday we mentioned that a Captain Jones of Philadelphia, was appointed *Secretary of the Navy*. So that we have for a Secretary of the Navy a man who headed a Philadelphia mob, to encourage the administration to pursue the war, and a Secretary of the Army, a man who exerted his best abilities to induce the heroes of the revolution to turn their arms against their own country. Nothing was wanting to compleat the administration but a man for Secretary of the Treasury who once headed a rebellion, and they have him in Albert Gallatin" (p. 1–2). William Jones was the new Secretary of the Navy. In the *New York Herald* of September 3, 1813, is an extract taken from the *Federal Republican* (of Washington): "*Appointments-in-petto*—BOMBASTICO INCHIQUIN to be Attorney General, vice MARQUIS OF WHITEWASH, so long inimical in the cabinet to secretary Mars. —*Note*: this nomination can only be read, at present, by a *Rush*-light. Brigadier-General BOANERGES to be Secretary of War, vice DUKE OF NEWBURGH, to be removed under the standing rescript of the Virginia dynasty" (p. 4–2). "Bombastico

Tommy,"[15] "Thomas the Magician,"[16] and "Thomas Conundrum."[17] President Madison was "Little Jemmy,"[18] "King James" or "King Jemmy,"[19] "James the Great,"[20] and "Mundungus,"[21] and was referred to as "James the First Emperor of the Virginians and King of the United States."[22] Timothy Pickering was "Uncle Tim."[23] On November 10, 1812, General Alexander Smyth issued a

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Inchiquin" was Charles J. Ingersoll, author of Inchiquin, the Jesuit's Letters (1810); the "Marquis of Whitewash" was apparently William Pinckney; "Rush-light" is an allusion to Richard Rush; while the identity of "Brigadier General Boanerges" escapes me.

Satirical allusions to the "Virginia dynasty" were long common in the Northern newspapers. In the *Columbian Centinel* of February 6, 1813, a correspondent said: "I WAS one of those who predicted in the year 1801, that the *Virginia* dynasty, which was at that time coming into power therein ever after to remain, would violate the Public Faith then pledged to the public creditors" (p. 2–1). See also *New York Evening Post*, November, 1812, p. 2–5; *Columbian Centinel*, November 7, 1812, 2–3; *Columbian Centinel*, June 4, 1814, p. 2–3.

[15] A satirical poem called "An Intercepted Letter, from Tall Tommy to Little Jemmy" appeared in the *Salem Gazette* of November 3, 1814, p. 4–1.

[16] "And it came to pass . . . that there arose a mighty man in the land, called Thomas, the Magician, on account of his great skill and cunning in dark and mysterious projects" (Adventures of Uncle Sam, 1812, p. 10).

[17] The Yankee in London, 1826, p. 9.

[18] See note 15, above.

[19] *New York Herald*, April 16, 1814, p. 4–1.

[20] *Connecticut Courant*, January 19, 1813, p. 3–1.

[21] "The reins of government were now held by Mundungus, the great tetrarch of the nation, the apostle and successor of the great Conundrum" (The Yankee in London, 1826, p. 93).

[22] *Portsmouth Oracle*, August 27, 1814, p. 2–2. In the *Columbian Centinel* of January 26, 1814, appeared these lines (p. 4–1):

> "Then, soon will the Country submit to the thing
> Which we wanted—*to make* MADISON *King!*"

[23] A poetical skit entitled "All Tories Together," which appeared in the *Aurora* of October 7, 1813, began thus (p. 2–5):

> "Oh! come in true jacobin trim,
> With birds of the same color'd feather,
> Bring your plots and intrigues, uncle TIM,
> And let's all be tories together."

In the *Northern Centinel* (Burlington, Vermont) of December 3, 1813, appeared the following: "But, the bold *benevolents* of Vermont have lately smuggled from the enemy a Governor of the true British stamp, and have placed him upon the throne of State. This must eclipse the boasted feats of *Bulwark Strong, Uncle Tim*, and *Fi-fo-fum*, these three champions, will need something more than their own sagacity, to place them again in the front rank of toryism, nothing short of their smuggling out the duke of York and Mrs. Clark can raise these eastern heroes to a level with his Majesty's brave subjects in Vermont" (p. 3–3). The allusion is to the recent election by the Legislature, there having been no election by the people, of Martin Chittenden as Governor of Vermont. By "benevolents" are meant members of the Washington Benevolent Societies, then common.

proclamation,[24] whereupon it was said that "during this time Gen. *Proclamation* curvetted about."[25] General James

[24] The proclamation, dated "Camp near Buffalo," is printed in the *Columbian Centinel* of November 25, 1812, p. 2–4. A parody on the proclamation, ending as follows, was printed in the *Albany Gazette* of December 3, 1812 (p. 3–4):

"And thus I close my *message* with
The NAME of ALEXANDER SMYTH!
A GEN'RAL, *Brigadier, Inspector,*
Commander, Conq'ror, and Protector—
Whose 'Brock's *black reg'ment'* ne'er did fear yet,
In *camp* at Buffalo, or *near* it."

Sir Isaac Brock, to whom Hull had capitulated, was killed at Queenston on October 13, 1812.

The boasting proclamations issued by the American generals were a constant source of ridicule in the peace papers. In his proclamation of July 12, 1812, General Hull said: "Had I any doubt of eventual success, I might ask your assistance, but I do not. I come prepared for any contingency—I have a force that will look down all opposition, and that force is but a vanguard of a much greater" (*Columbian Centinel*, August 5, 1812, p. 1–4). The *Portsmouth Oracle* of September 8, 1812, spoke of Hull's proclamation "to look down opposition" in Canada (p. 3–4). The *Connecticut Courant* of December 22, 1812, said that Hull "issued a look down proclamation to the affrighted Canadians" (p. 1–4). The *Manlius Times*, quoted in the *New England Palladium* of October 22, 1813, stated that "The *Proclamation campaign* has again commenced upon the Niagara frontiers" (p. 2–1). In the *Salem Gazette* of December 3, 1813, appeared the following: "The same Collectors will be employed next winter to execute the same duties *in the Moon*, which, it is expected, will be 'looked down' during the next campaign!" (p. 3–2).

On August 16, 1812, Hull ignominiously gave up himself, his army, and Detroit, and incidentally enriched the language with a new verb. The surrender of Burgoyne at Saratoga, of Lincoln at Charleston, and of Cornwallis at Yorktown, had given rise to the words "Burgoynade," "to Burgoyne," "Lincolnade," and "Cornwallisade." The *Connecticut Courant* of September 22, 1812, said: "Should Gen. Dearborn enter the territory, he ought, if he means not to be Hull'd, or defeated, to have 25 or 30,000 men" (p. 3–4). The *Military Monitor* of October 5, 1812, quoted the following from the *Aurora:* "These facts show the absurdity of the idea of a force of 4,000 men marching to be Hull-ed, in a country where 19,000 of their countrymen were once before BURGOYNED" (I, 59). The *New Hampshire Gazette* of April 20, 1813, remarked: "From every section of the union, we hear of the march of troops and active preparations to open the campaign on the northern frontier with vigor and unless our gallant army is again *Hulled*, the British flag will soon disappear from Canada" (p. 3–2). The *New York Herald* of March 30, 1814, quoted the following from a Herkimer (New York) paper: "The prevailing opinion now is, that the campaign will be opened at Niagara; some suppose Detroit. If at the latter place, with the paltry force now marching in that direction, we shall most certainly get *Hull'd*" (p. 3–5).

[25] *Columbian Centinel*, December 16, 1812 (p. 2–2). The following is taken from the *Yankee* (Boston) of December 18, 1812 (p. 3–2):

"*General Smyth*—again.

"How many Militia and Volunteers, with such Generals as *Hull, Smyth*, et cetera, will conquer Canada?

"A Yankee answer by another question—How many snow balls will heat an oven?"

Wilkinson was called "Don" or "Don Jamie," in allusion to Don Quixote.[26]

Besides these nicknames applied to persons, there were several epithets which were employed to designate a class. Those who favored the war were called "Wildcats,"[27] "War-dogs,"[28] "War-hirelings,"[29] "War-men,"[30] and "War-sharks,"[31] but the favorite term was "War-hawks." Under the head of "Political Intoxication," the following appeared in the *Columbian Centinel* of February 19, 1812 (p. 4–1):

> "OUR *War-Hawks* when pot valiant grown,
> Could they the British King dethrone,
> Would sacrifice a man a day;—
> To me the reason's very plain,
> Why topers talk in such a strain—
> They want a double* *Can-a-day.*
> **Upper* and *Lower.*"

"The noisy and vociferous demagogues and war hawks," said the *Portland Gazette*, " and office hunters in this vicinity, ...have never once *slipt out of their beds of down*, or *paid*

In the *Columbian Centinel* of December 23, 1812, appeared the following (p. 2–3): "A letter from *Albany*, says, 'All the *Generals* from *Canada* are extremely mortified and crest-fallen. The boys at *Buffalo* form themselves into groups, and sing the following altered stanza of *Yankee Doodle*:'—

> "'*When* SMYTHE *a* Brag*adier had got,*
> *He prov'd a darned coward—*
> *He durst not go to* Canada
> *For fear of being devoured.*
> *Yankee doodle, doodle do—*
> *Yankee doodle dandy—*
> *Mind the* back *step of the march—*
> *And with your* legs *be handy.*"'

[26] *Salem Gazette*, May 3, 1814 (p. 2–4). In the *Salem Gazette* of November 25, 1813, appeared a paragraph headed "Braggardism! *Wilkinson's Glorious Expedition to Canada!*" (p. 2–2). The unsuccessful expedition into Canada gave rise to an epigram printed in the *Columbian Centinel* of December 11, 1813:

> "*Gen.* WILKINSON'S *late Expedition.*
> WITH Conquest how his bosom burn'd!—
> He *went*—he *saw*—and then—*return'd.*"

[27] "Some of the *Wildcats* of Congress," said the *Columbian Centinel* of June 6, 1812, "have gone home, unable to incur the awful responsibility of unnecessary *War*" (p. 2–5).

[28] *Columbian Centinel*, October 23, 1813, p. 2–1; June 29, 1814, p. 2–3.

[29] *Columbian Centinel*, June 18, 1814, p. 2–3.

[30] *Columbian Centinel*, June 11, 1814, p. 2–4.

[31] *Columbian Centinel*, September 1, 1813, p. 2–1.

a single cent from their pockets, in support of their darling war."[32]

The "War-hawks" retaliated by calling the peace men "Tories" and likening them to the Loyalists of the Revolution. "The *war-hawks* of that vicinity," said the *New York Evening Post* of October 28, 1812, "came to his house and began abusing him with the usual slang of *Federalist, old Tory,* &c." (p. 2–4).

Nowhere was the depth of popular feeling more clearly shown than in the toasts that were offered at the various dinners which were so freely partaken of on the Fourth of July and on other occasions. Such dinners would now seem somewhat provincial, but they were exceedingly common late in the eighteenth and early in the nineteenth centuries, and no doubt they were of service in fostering the spirit of nationality.[33]

The following toasts were given in 1812. At Philadelphia: "May the tories of N. England repent—*or be*

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[32] Quoted in the supplement to the *Albany Gazette* of November 19, 1812 (p. 1–1). The term was sometimes used attributively. Thus we hear of "the War-Hawk Government" (*Columbian Centinel*, September 28, 1814, p. 1–2); of "the war-hawk party" (*Portsmouth Oracle*, January 28, 1815, p. 3–2); of "the War-Hawk rulers" (*Columbian Centinel*, September 28, 1814, p. 1–2); and of "our War-Hawk Selectmen" (*Connecticut Courant*, August 16, 1814, p. 1–5).

[33] In a speech on the admission of the Territory of Orleans, delivered in Congress on January 14, 1811, Josiah Quincy declared it as his "deliberate opinion that, if this bill passes, . . . it will be the duty of some" of the States "to prepare definitely for a separation—amicably, if they can; violently, if they must" (Speeches, 1874, p. 196). While this remark has become historic, it is almost invariably misquoted. In a speech made in Congress on January 8, 1813, Henry Clay, referring to Quincy, said: "The gentleman can not have forgotten his own sentiments, uttered even on the floor of this House, 'peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must'" (Works, 1897, V, 58). It is the Clay version that has become a familiar quotation.

In the *Boston Herald* of November 23, 1904, appeared the following:

"In a signed article in the Huntsville, Ala., *Mercury*, R. T. Bentley, a well-known man, says:

"'It appearing that Theodore Roosevelt, the head and front of the republican party, which represents the dangerous policies of civilization, protective tariff, imperialism and social equality, has been elected president of the United States by a strictly sectional vote, and has established an insurmountable barrier between the north and south, I feel constrained to express my humble opinion, as a true and patriotic American citizen of the south, that if the republican party should continue its dangerous policies for the next 4 yrs. and should triumph in the next national election, that the 13 states which voted for A. B. Parker should secede from the union and by force of arms resist an oppression which means the early fall of our great republic.'"

At the present day such a statement merely excites amusement, as no one takes it seriously; but in 1812 it was different.

damned."[34] At Norwich, Vermont: "*The TORIES!*—Too mean to live, too wicked to die—unworthy of heaven, and too bad for hell;—may the Angel of darkness convey them beyond the bounds of either."[35]

In 1813 were given the toasts which follow. At Boston: "May the traitorous designs of *junto federalists* and their wicked declaration, that '*Britain is the bulwark of our religion,*' become more and more obnoxious by appointing 'FEE, FOW, FUM' ORATORS to promulgate their detestable principles."[36] At Sutton, Massachusetts: "Caleb Strong: The addresser of Gage,[37] the defender of impressment, the justifier of Indian massacres, the advocate of England, and the enemy of America.—May he retire, repent, and yet be saved."[38] At Philadelphia: "Governor Strong: Eternal infamy and execration to the foul hypocrite who could be base enough to pronounce the most savage, unprincipled and blood thirsty nation on the face of the earth the 'bulwark of our religion.' *Over the hills and far away.*"[39] At Camp Meigs: "The tories and apologists for the wrongs done us by the British government where they ought to be, *kissing their monarch's toe. Rogue's March.*"[40] At New York: "*Tories*—old, new—native and exotic—marshal's pass-

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[34] *Aurora*, July 7, 1812, p. 2–2.

[35] *Portsmouth Oracle*, August 22, 1812, p. 4–1.

[36] *Aurora*, July 27, 1813.

[37] Caleb Strong was one of the twenty-eight "Barristers and Attornies at Law" who addressed Gage on July 1, 1774 (*Boston News-Letter*, July 7, 1774, p. 1–1). Those who addressed Gage on his departure in October, 1775, were of course loyalists; but the addresses to Gage on his arrival in 1774 were signed by both loyalists and ardent patriots. Perhaps no one received harder blows from his opponents in the war of 1812 than Strong. The following toast was given at Bernardston, Massachusetts: "The governor of Massachusetts. In 1774 the loyal addresser of Gage, in 1812 and 13 the eulogist and special pleader of the 'bulwark of our religion'" (*Aurora*, August 3, 1813, p. 1–3). At Pittsfield, Massachusetts: "Caleb Strong—The man, who by cunning concealment and tory prevarication, would endeavor to reason away the rights of his country, is unworthy of its confidence" (*Aurora*, July 22, 1813, p. 1). At Passyunk: "Execration to the hoary head traitorous vindicator of the barbarities of the monstrous government of England: His treason is only equal to his cowardice; 'England has done us no essential injury:' YOU LIE YOU V————" (*Aurora*, July 12, 1813, p. 2–5).

There is an expression in the last toast that has a familiar sound at the present day.

[38] *Aurora*, August 3, 1813, p. 1–3.

[39] *Aurora*, July 9, 1813, p. 2–4.

[40] *National Intelligencer* (Washington), July 29, 1813, p. 1–3.

ports—time—three seconds—destination—'*the fast anchored isle.*' "[41]

In 1814 were given the following toasts. At Belfast, Maine: "The War-Hawks and Vultures at Washington:—Having *usurped* the place of the towering Eagle, may they be *expelled* from the capitol, with their *wings clipped* and a label about their necks, to the *wilds* of *Kentucky*, the *native haunts* of birds of *prey.*"[42] At Scituate, Massachusetts: "*The President of the United States*—Respect for the office, but contempt for the incumbent—an immediate resignation his first duty—the Island of Elba his last retreat."[43] At Hudson, New York: "*Massachusetts*—British influence but poor bait for Codfish—may she let down her net the right side of the Ship."[44] At Winchendon, Massachusetts: "*James I. of America.*—In the imitation of his prototype may he soon be compelled by the voice of the people to abdicate in favour of a rightful heir.—3 *cheers.*"[45] At

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[41] *Military Monitor*, April 5, 1813, I, 254. The following amusing paragraph may be quoted here: "*Remarkable Incident.*—On the 4th of July, 1812, General CHANDLER gave as a toast at *Augusta:*— 'The 4th of July 1813—May WE on that day *drink wine within the walls of Quebec!*' On this same 4th of July he was within the walls of *Quebec* (a prisoner) and from the known hospitality of the citizens of that place we have no doubt his wish was literally gratified" (*Columbian Centinel*, July 7, 1813, p. 2–4).

[42] *Columbian Centinel*, March 9, 1814, p. 2–2.

[43] *Columbian Centinel*, July 9, 1814, p. 1–5.

[44] *Bee* (Hudson), July 12, 1814, p. 3–3.

[45] *Massachusetts Spy*, July 20, 1814, p. 3–2. It is curious to see how history repeats itself. Between 1898 and his death, President McKinley was sometimes alluded to as "William I." In the *Boston Herald* of January 28, 1907, we read of "Kaiser Theodore," and in the same paper of November 11, 1907, of "Theodore I." Just as Monroe was alluded to in 1814 as "the heir apparent," so now the same term is applied to Secretary Taft. See *Nation*, August 22, 1907, LXXXV, 153; *Boston Herald*, November 6, 1907, p. 6–5; *Boston Evening Transcript*, December 2, 1907; *Boston Herald*, March 3, 1908, p. 6–3. Even the word "imperial" is not new to our politics. In the *New York Herald* of May 5, 1813, it was satirically said that "the *bewilderification* of the enemy, on beholding our imperial standard, baffles all description" (p. 2–4).

Two examples of the spreadeagleism of the times will prove amusing. The following toast was given at Waterville, Maine, on July 4, 1815: "*The Eagle of the United States*—'May she extend her wings from the *Atlantic* to the *Pacific*; and fixing her talons on the *Isthmus of Darien*, stretch with her beak to the *Northern Pole*'" (*Salem Gazette*, July 18, 1815, p. 4–1). Capt. Ross Bird of the United States Army having been placed under arrest and bereft of his sword, he sent in his resignation, in part as follows: "In leaving the service, I am not abandoning the cause of republicanism, but yet hope to brandish the glittering steel in the field, and carve my way to a name which shall prove my country's neglect; and when this mortal part shall be closetted in the dust, and the soul shall wing its flight for the regions

New York: "*Timothy Pickering.*—'A greater liar Parthia never bred.' "[46]

It is clear that every one was in an irritated frame of mind, the merest trifle being sufficient to arouse bitter feelings, and even to cause men to come to actual blows. Duel after duel was fought by those in the upper classes of society—whether military, naval, or civil; and even among respectable people hand to hand fights seem occasionally to have taken place.[47] To add to the general irritation, several especially unpopular laws were enacted. An act laying direct and other taxes was approved by President Madison on July 30, and went into effect on December 25,

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above, in passing by the palefaced moon, I shall hang my hat upon brilliant Mars, and make a report to each superlative star—and arriving at the portals of Heaven's high Chancery, shall demand of the attending Angel to be ushered into the presence of Washington" (*New York Herald*, November 10, 1813, p. 1–3).

[46] *New York Herald*, July 13, 1814, p. 1–1.

[47] Two may be specified. The following is taken from the *New York Herald* of April 10, 1813: "*Fracas at Albany.*—By the passengers in the Steam Boat we are informed, that a fracas took place in Albany last Wednesday [April 7], between Col. Peter B. Porter and John Lovett, Esq., occasioned by some publications which have been made relative to the affair between Col. S. Van Rensselaer and Col. Porter. It is said Col. Porter, after some high words had passed, attacked Mr. Lovett with a cane, on which Mr. Lovett closed in with him and was like to demolish him, when some of the by-standers interfered and put an end to the contest" (p. 3–2).

The other case, curiously enough, concerns a man of whom we shall hear later in connection with the alleged origin of Uncle Sam. In the *Albany Gazette* of September 20, 1813, appeared this (p. 3–4):

"The following note has been handed to us by Mr. Butler—We do not intend to prejudge the cause of dispute by its insertion. The *Gazette* will be freely open to Mr. Anderson.

"ELBERT ANDERSON, Jun. Contractor U. S. Army, is a base *Villain*, a *Liar* and a *Coward*.

James BUTLER.

"18th *September*, 1813."

Anderson and Butler apparently had a hand to hand scrimmage at Plattsburgh, for in the *Albany Gazette* of September 30, 1813, was printed a communication in part as follows (p. 3–3):

"*Albany*, 28th, *Sept.* 1813.

"Messrs. WEBSTERS and SKINNERS,

"A publication having appeared in your paper, during the absence of the Contractor, signed '*James Butler*,' a friend to the former gentleman, who was an eye witness to the fracas at Plattsburgh, requests you to publish the following statement from the *Plattsburgh Republican*, of the 18th inst. . . .

"A rash man has applied to the Contractor for the Army, epithets of a libellous and scurrilous nature. . . . .

"*Plattsburgh, Sept.* 15, 1813."

So far as I have noted, the incident closed with the publication in the *Albany Gazette* of October 4, 1813, of a card from Butler dated Lansingburgh, September 29, stating that the writer of the above letter was "an infamous liar" (p. 3–2).

1813.[48] In a Worcester paper of December 22, 1813, appeared the following:

"*The New Army*—The tax-gathering campaign is about opening, and will undoubtedly be both brilliant and successful, as the army of assessors and collectors is very numerous and ably supported by the strong arm of the government.—This *patriotic* band of harpies will unquestionably acquit themselves with great skill and adroitness in diving to the bottom of the farmers' pockets and filching away the hard-earnings of many a tedious day."[49]

Long before this, however, there had been clashes between United States custom house officers and others. A communication dated Portland, Massachusetts,[50] May 28, 1813, beginning with the statement that "A most daring infringement of the laws took place here upon the evening of the 25th," went on to describe the seizure of goods by custom house officers, who were set upon by smugglers, the latter making off with the goods.[51] In September, 1813, what is described as "a battle" took place at Granville, New York, on the borders of Vermont, between United States custom house officers and officials of New York.

Meanwhile, however, we get our first glimpse of Uncle Sam. An article half a column in length, headed "For the Troy Post," was printed in that paper of September 7, 1813, and began as follows:

" 'Loss upon loss, and no ill luck stiring [*sic*] but what lights upon UNCLE SAM'S shoulders,' exclaim the Government editors, in every part of the Country. The Albany *Argus* of last Tuesday laments the disasters and disappointments of our Border War, in most pathetic strains &c. &c."

In a note is given this explanation:

"This cant name for our government has got almost as current as 'John Bull.' The letters U. S. on the government waggons, &c are supposed to have given rise to it" (p. 3–3).

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[48] See *New Hampshire Gazette*, September 14, 21, 1813; *New York Herald*, August 25, 28, 1813; *Columbian Centinel*, December 25, 1813.

[49] *Massachusetts Spy*, December 22, 1813, p. 1–3.

[50] It will be remembered that until 1820 Maine was part of Massachusetts.

[51] Quoted in the *National Intelligencer* (Washington), June 8, 1813, p. 2–3.

In the *Lansingburgh Gazette* of late in September or possibly October 1, 1813, appeared the following:

"*Land Privateering.*—The following is a short sketch of a recent battle, under the act[52] to encourage land-privateering, between what are called in this part of the country, *Uncle Sam's Men* and the *Men of New-York:*—On Friday se'nnight, a quantity of goods were seized pursuant to the act aforesaid, by a custom house officer at Granville, in Washington county, under the pretence that they had been smuggled from Canada. On the Monday succeeding the owner obtained a writ of replevin, and the sheriff, after meeting with some opposition, succeeded, in possessing himself of the goods, according to the laws of this state. *Uncle Sam's Men,* however, feeling little disposition to be deprived of their booty in this manner, (for secure as they thought of the whole, they had *plundered* but a small part of the goods,) raised a band of war hawks, and attempted a rescue. The sherriff called the posse of the neighborhood to his assistance, and the parties being nearly equal, altho' the war-hawks were rather the most numerous, a battle royal ensued. It was long and obstinately contested; but ended in the complete discomfiture of *Uncle Sam's* party, who retired from the conflict, marked with many a broken head and bruised limb, leaving the *Men of New-York* in possession of the field of battle and the goods."[53]

In a communication dated Burlington, Vermont, October 1, 1813, appeared the following:

"The *patriotic* Volunteers, who have *marched* here to guard the public stores in the absence of the regular army, are taking *'long furloughs,'* and volunteering for *home* by tens and fifties, and hundreds.—The pretence is, that *Uncle Sam,* the now popular explication of the U. S. does not pay well; and that the cold begins to pinch."[54]

From a paper published at Herkimer, New York, on January 27, 1814, is taken the following:

" *'Uncle Sam's' hard bargains.* —On Thursday afternoon of last week, about thirty sleighs, 'more or less'[55] loaded with

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[52] I do not know what act is meant.

[53] Quoted in the *New York Herald,* October 2, 1813, p. 3–3. I have been unable to find a copy of the *Lansingburgh Gazette* containing the extract.

[54] Quoted in the *Columbian Centinel,* October 9, 1813, p. 2–3.

[55] The words "more or less" apparently occurred in the official accounts of the capture of York in April, 1813, but I have not been able to discover in exactly what connection. At all events, they caused much fun in the peace papers. "One

the 'weak and wounded, sick and sore' of our armies on the frontiers, passed through this village for Greenbush. Never before have we beheld such a picture. Half-naked, half-frozen, and by their looks half-starved: some with and some without legs, others upon crutches, or supporting each other from falling, with their heads or arms bandaged, and the blood still oozing from their half drest wounds—their meagre, emaciated and ghastly appearance presented at once to the eye of the beholder, a striking picture *of the horrors of war* and *neglect.*"[56]

In a paper published at Windsor, Vermont, in February, 1814, are found allusions to Secretary Armstrong and Josiah Quincy:

"[*The following Extraordinary Advertisement is copied from the last* (*Windsor*) *Washingtonian.*]

"*SLAVES WANTED!*

"UNCLE SAM, a worthy gentleman Slaveholder (*of Virginia*) wants to purchase, at 124 dollars a head, 65,000 ('more or less') stout, able-bodied, full-blooded YANKEES, to aid Field Marshall, *the Duke of Newburgh*, in taking Possession of a Plantation he has lately bargained for, (*with himself*) if he can get it, IN CANADA. Apply at the truly fortunate Lottery Office;—or, elsewhere, if more convenient;—as every 'Office-holder or Citizen,' in the United States, is fully authorized and empowered to contract, as the acknowledged agent of his *Uncle.*

"N. B.—Uncle Sam's *purse* is rather low—but no matter. The *Duke* will guarantee the pay—'FORCIBLY—*if he must.*'"[57]

In the *Herkimer American* of April 28, 1814, was printed the following:

"*Economy.*—A few days since, in a neighboring town *twelve* United States' waggons were *repaired*, for which the blacksmith was paid *one thousand eight hundred dollars* out of *Uncle Sam's* purse. *Query.* How much is the usual cost of a new waggon?"[58]

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dead Indian, 'more or less,'" said the *New York Herald* of July 14, 1813, p. 1–1. "*Wanted,*" declared the *Columbian Centinel* of December 4, 1813, "about five hundred ('more or less') able-bodied, stout-hearted *real Americans*, to collect our *land tax* in our territory of Canada" (p. 2–3).

[56] Quoted in the *Connecticut Courant*, February 8, 1814, p. 3–2. The same passage is quoted in the *Massachusetts Spy* of February 9, 1814, p. 2–3, and February 23, p. 4–3, except that in both instances the words "'Uncle Sam's' hard bargains" are omitted.

[57] Quoted in the *Salem Gazette*, February 14, 1814, p. 3–3. See p. 29, note 33, above.

[58] Quoted in the *New York Spectator*, May 7, 1814, p. 1–1. The passage was also printed in the *Massachusetts Spy* of May 25, 1814, p. 3–3.

In or about May, 1814, the Keene *Sentinel* printed the following:

"*More Economy!*—Colonel Pickering in his Speech on the Loan Bill, stated, on direct information from two members of the former Congress, that a waggon started with 40 bushels of corn for the army—that the team of horses consumed 18 bushels on the way—reserved 18 to feed them on returning, and delivered 4 bushels, which must, at this rate, have cost *fifty dollars* a bushel!

"Everyone remembers the vinegar transported from Boston to Albany, which might have been procured *cheaper* at the latter than the former place.

"*Uncle Sam's* teams are continually passing thro' this town, with cannon balls, &c. for the fleet at Vergennes. These balls are transported from Boston, at an expense of not less than *twenty shillings* for every 100 wt. i. e. every 32 lb. ball costs a dollar for transportation only. Now it is well known there are several foundaries in the vicinity of the Lake, and one very extensive one in Vergennes.—What then could induce the contractor to resort to this useless waste of the *sinews of war?* Quere. Do not the contractors have a certain per cent? If so, the larger the bills are, the better for them."[59]

An extract dated Baltimore, June 22, 1814, reads as follows:

"A detachment of 260 Uncle Sam's troops, under Major KEYSER have embarked from Baltimore, to aid in raising the blockade of BARNEY'S flotilla. [This is as it should be,—The regulars are paid and fed for the common defense.]"[60]

The following passage is dated Keene, New Hampshire, November 5, 1814:

"The soldiers, drafted for the defence of Portsmouth are mostly on their return home. By some *arrangement* between the Governor and General Chandler, the latter, it seems, undertook to provide for, and *pay* the troops. The *names* of those poor fellows are on *Uncle Sam's* pay roll; but not a cent of money have any of them received. This will come when the government loan is filled, and this loan will be filled when public credit is restored, either before, or *after* 'the *troubled night* of this administration departs.' "[61]

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[59] Quoted in the *Portsmouth Oracle*, May 21, 1814, p. 2–5. The story of the wagon which started with forty bushels of corn, related by Timothy Pickering, was reprinted in the *Massachusetts Spy* of May 25, 1814, p. 3–3, but "Uncle Sam" is omitted.

[60] Quoted in the *Columbian Centinel*, June 29, 1814, p. 2–1.

[61] Quoted in the *New York Herald*, November 16, 1814, p. 3–4.

The following story appeared in the *Columbian Centinel* of December 3, 1814:

"*UNCLE SAM* AND *JOHN BULL.*

"U. Sam pays his soldier-servants in Paper Money ('Chequer Bills) which the poor fellows carry to the brokers, and sell at a loss from 20 to 30 dollars in a hundred, and which Uncle Sam thinks is so much saved.

"But *John Bull*, an old fool, carries his Paper Money to market himself, gets as much gold and silver for it as he can—and pays off his soldier-servants in Ready Rhino, thereby losing all the discount himself.

"Who then shall say, that Uncle Sam is not a prudent, calculating fellow—and John Bull a fool and a spend-thrift?"[62]

The *Plattsburg Herald* of December 9, 1814, contained the following:

" 'UNCLE SAM'S PAY'—AGAIN.—The detatched Militia, of this state, who have been stationed at this post for these three months past, are principally discharged, and are to leave this place to-day. For the encouragement of the citizens of this state to unite in defence of 'Free Trade and Sailor's Rights,'—. . . we have to inform them that the aforesaid militia are now permitted to leave this, and get to their homes as they can, without (as they inform us) a cent of their pay, or even so much as the offer of a single Treasury Note, some of them the distance of 200 miles. . . Who will not unite in this righteous war, and support the just and wise administration who declared it?—UNION! UNION!"[63]

In the *Salem Gazette* of January 27, 1815, was printed the following:

"According to the Recruiting Orders lately issued, all men enlisted, before they pass muster, must be *stripped*. This is well enough, the peacable *citizens* have been *stripped* by the war-hawk party long since; and it is high time the system should be extended to the *military* of Uncle Sam's family."[64]

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[62] The story was reprinted in the *New York Herald* of December 7, 1814, p. 2–3.

[63] Quoted in the *New York Herald*, December 21, 1814, p. 3–5.

[64] The extract was reprinted in the *Portsmouth Oracle* of January 28, 1815, p. 3–2; and in the *Connecticut Courant* of February 7, 1815, p. 3–1.

The *New Bedford Mercury* of January 27, 1815, contained the following:

"*UNCLE SAM'S BARGAINS.*

"On Tuesday last, the Deputy Collector of the 14th Collection District, agreeable to previous notice, proceeded to sell the real estate of about 30 persons of this town, for payment of Direct Taxes. No person appearing to purchase, the whole was *knocked down to Uncle Sam*—Whether Uncle Sam or his agents will ever DARE attempt to take possession of these purchases, is another part of the business."[65]

The above passage was quoted early in 1815 by Hezekiah Niles, who appended this note: "U. S. or Uncle Sam—a cant term in the army for the United States."[66]

In the *Columbian Centinel* of June 21, 1815, appeared the following:

A District Paymaster of the U. S. residing in N. Y. by the name of *Whittleby* has advertised having been robbed of *Thirty Thousand* dollars of Uncle Sam's money intended to pay the militia. It was in his Portmanteau, which *some how* or other, and *somewhere* or other, was cut open, and the money all rifled! The pay-master having a bad memory, could not recollect the denominations of bills; and forgot to offer a reward for the detection of the 'nefarious and daring wretch' " (p. 2–2).

Uncle Sam apparently made his first appearance in verse in a song called "Siege of Plattsburg, Sung at the Theatre, in Albany in the character of a Black Sailor. Tune—'Boyn Water.' " There are four stanzas, the first as follows:

"Back side Albany stan' lake Champlain,
One little pond, haf full a' water
Plat-te-bug dare too, close pon de main,
Town small—he grow bigger do herearter.
On lake Champlain,
Uncle Sam set he boat,
And Massa M'Donough, he sail 'em;

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[65] Quoted in the *Salem Gazette*, January 21, 1815, p. 3–1; *Portsmouth Oracle*, February 4, p. 3–1; *Connecticut Courant*, February 7, p. 1-3.

[66] Supplement to *Niles' Register*, VII, 187. That volume ended with the issue of February 25, 1815.

While Gen'ral M'Comb
Make Plat-te-bug he home,
Wid de army, who courage nebber fail 'em."[67]

At this point, let us pause a moment and review the evidence—evidence which thus far has been drawn wholly from the newspapers. The term Uncle Sam is first found in September, 1813, or when the war was half over, though even then it was alleged to have "got almost as current as 'John Bull.' "[68] While this statement may be true as regards the neighborhood of Greenbush,[69] at which place the camp was a rendezvous for the soldiers, it is not true of the country as a whole.[70] The term first appeared in papers published in cities or towns either in New York—as Troy, Lansingburgh, and Herkimer; or in Vermont—as Burlington and Windsor. In short, it arose exactly where one would expect it to arise—either in the neighborhood of Greenbush or along the Canadian frontiers where the fighting was done. Finally, there is one singular feature of the evidence. Every instance of Uncle Sam thus far

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[67] Supplement to *Niles' Register*, IX, 95. That volume ended with the issue of February 24, 1816. The *Albany Register* of December 6, 1814, advertised a play, farce, and "Naval Pillar" to take place at the theatre the following evening "in honor of the memorable Naval Conflict on Lake Champlain, fought on the glorious Eleventh of September" (p. 3–4). The song in the text may have been written for that occasion, though it is not mentioned in the advertisement.

[68] See p. 33, above.

[69] There are constant allusions in the newspapers to Greenbush. The *Connecticut Courant* of September 29, 1812, printed an extract dated Pittsfield, September 17: "*Democratic Economy.*—Within a few days past, several waggon loads of *Vinegar* and *Molasses* have passed through this village, on the way from Boston to Greenbush, near Albany. These articles were purchased at Boston for the use of the troops at Greenbush. The vinegar cost the government Five Dollars per barrel, in Boston; and according to the statement of the teamsters, the expence of transportation would be much more than the first cost. Now we are told, and we believe correctly, that vinegar can be purchased in Albany at less than four dollars per barrel. And we presume that molasses can be bought in Albany and New-York, as cheap as in Boston.—Why, then, this enormous expence of transportation!—So goes the people's money!" (p. 2–5).

[70] As late as February, 1815, the editor of a Baltimore paper thought it necessary to explain the meaning of the term. See p. 38, note 66, above. The newspapers throughout the war literally swarm with allusions to John Bull, Yankee, Yankee Doodle, and Brother Jonathan. On the other hand, no allusion to Uncle Sam has yet been found before September, 1813, while from then until 1816 I have encountered less than thirty examples, all of which are quoted or cited in the present paper either in text or footnotes. This statement is based on an examination of newspapers published during 1812-1815 in Portsmouth, Salem, Boston, Worcester, Hartford, Troy, Albany, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington.

given, except that in the "Siege of Plattsburg," is taken from a peace paper, while not once does the term occur in a war paper. It is not easy to see why the war papers should have avoided the term, and the fact that they did would seem to indicate that it was employed somewhat derisively by the peace men. Possibly the sobriquet was regarded as merely lacking in dignity. Or it may be, feeling running so high, that the mere fact of its being taken up by one party was sufficient to condemn it in the eyes of the other. But whatever the reason, the fact is striking, and is comparable to the avoidance of the word Yankee by the New Englanders previous to the battle of Lexington. Does not an absolute boycott point at least to a distaste? It should also be noted that by "Uncle Sam's men" were meant, at first, not soldiers but United States custom house officers.

Thus far, however, the term has been merely a colloquialism, found only in the newspapers. Let us now follow its progress in the literary language. Its first appearance in a book was in a political skit published in 1816, and written partly in Biblical phrase. Whose identity was concealed under the pseudonym of Frederick Augustus Fidfaddy, the alleged author of The Adventures of Uncle Sam, I do not know. The book itself,[71] like James K. Paulding's Diverting History of John Bull and Brother Jonathan (published in 1812) and all similar skits, is modelled on Arbuthnot's Law is a Bottomless Pit—usually called the History of John Bull—published in 1712. In it we find not merely Uncle Sam, but Sam, Samuel, Samuelite, Uncle Samuel, and Uncle Samuel's Lady—meaning Congress. A few extracts follow:

" 'WHAT! another history of the war? We cannot be always reading' exclaims a Smoking Lounger, while he strikes his silver headed rattan against the door-post of the Bookseller. Softly, my friend, the work professes to be the Adventures of

[71] As this tract of 142 pages is apparently rare, I give the title: "The Adventures of Uncle Sam, in Search after his lost Honor. By Frederick Augustus Fidfaddy, Esq., Member of the Legion of Honor, Scratch-etary to Uncle Sam, and Privy Counsellor to himself. Middletown: Printed by Seth Richards. 1816." It was copyrighted May 16, 1816.

your own dear Uncle, if you are a native American, or of your *Uncle-in-Law*, if you are not . . . Shall Amadis de Gaul, Don Quixote and Earl Strongbow, confer unfading glories on the respective countries which were the theatres of their exploits; and miser-like, pocket all the renown of romantic chivalry? Forbid it Uncle Sam, and all his sons! . . . In short, the learned Author, in imitation of high authorities, solicits the indulgence of the public:—1. With regard to the appearance of our common Uncle Sam. Although, he is old enough to be very whimsical, he is like the Author, a green character on the stage. . . . Behold said Thomas,[72] how mine Uncle Samuel hath fought in times past against John Bull and hath prevailed, nevertheless, he oweth at this time, many talents of silver. . . . The place chosen for the second attempt to innoculate the clownish Snowfieldians[73] with blessings of Liberty, was Queenston, a pleasant town separated from the dominions of Sam, by that frith of water which is known by the name of the St.Lawrence. . . . Now the man Proctor[74] the son of Belial of whom we have spoken had his evil heart stirred within him again to vex the sons of Samuel. And as his manner was he assembled again the wicked sons of Cain, and devised mischief against the small band of Samuelites which lay at Lower Sandusky. . . . It becomes us to notice a remarkable change in Uncle Sam's Lady. She has lately discarded all her former notions of parsimony and philosophic whims of economy, and has most graciously bestowed on herself a very splendid Salary, and whereas, formerly her family servants received only six dollars *per diem*, they now receive fifteen hundred, for each entertainment or levee she holds, to see company."[75]

It has already been noted that in books published in 1812 and 1814, Paulding did not employ the term Uncle Sam.[76] But in a work published in 1817 he wrote:

"This subject reminds me of a queer fellow that went by the name of *Paddy Whack*, who came over from a place called *Knockecroghery*, as I think and palmed himself upon a good-natured kinsman of mine, whom we familiarly called *Uncle Sam*. Pat, . . . was grandson, by the mother's side, to the well known humorist, *Paddy from Cork*, who wore his coat buttoned behind to keep his belly warm; and the old man was so pleased

[72] Jefferson.
[73] The Canadians.
[74] Henry A. Proctor, the British general.
[75] Adventures of Uncle Sam, pp. 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 53, 96, 140.
[76] See p. 22, note 3, above.

with his mode of eating buttermilk without any teeth, that he insisted upon having him christened after his name. . . . So he took up the business of patriotism, and fastened himself upon *Uncle Sam,* who was a liberal, good-hearted old fellow, that kept open house to all comers, and received *Pat* with kindness and hospitality, because he was poor and an exile."[77]

The first foreigner to use the term was apparently W. Faux, who in a book written between 1819 and 1823 frequently employed it. "Almost all Americans," he quotes a Mr. Perry as saying, "are boys in everything but vice and folly! In their eyes *Uncle Sam* is a right slick, mighty fine, smart, big man."[78] On November 24, 1821, Hezekiah Niles wrote:

"I am, however, diverted from the subject I meant to speak of—that is, the 'ways and means' to keep the wheels of the government a-going; a most serious concern, especially to those who live upon the treasury, or expect to become rich by *plucking* 'Uncle Sam's' great grey goose."[79]

In the *Baltimore Patriot* of November 11, 1824, appeared the following:

"ANOTHER PRESIDENTIAL CARICATURE.

. . . It is a proof sheet of a print entitled—'CAUCUS CURS *in full* YELL, *or a* WAR WHOOP *to saddle on the* PEOPLE *a* PAPPOOSE PRESIDENT.' In the background stands the President's house, on the right of which '*Uncle Sam's Treasury pap house,*' with its '*amalgamation-tool department*' " (p. 2–2).

In 1826 Mrs. Anne Royall, an eccentric lady who wrote several books of travel, not lacking in sharp hits, remarked:

"It often happened while in Washington, that I met with 'uncle Sam's' men, as they call themselves. Walking in the capitol square one day, I stepped up to a man whom I found there at work, and asked him whom he worked for, (meaning his employer, from whom I wished to obtain some information,) 'me,' said the fellow, 'I work for uncle Sam,' in a tone of unqualified impudence. No matter where you meet those

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[77] Letters from the South written during an Excursion in the Summer of 1816, (1817), II, 207, 208, 210.

[78] Memorable Days in America (1823), p. 126. See also pp. 99, 140, 162, 188, 215, 225, 262, 381.

[79] *Niles' Register,* XXI, 199. See also XXI, 38, 197.

understrappers you may distinguish them by their unparalleled effrontery."[80]

One of Paulding's innumerable skits was "The History of Uncle Sam and his Boys: a Tale for Politicians," originally published in the *New York Mirror* in 1831. In this we read:

"ONCE upon a time there lived, and still lives, in a country lying far to the west, a famous squire, rich in lands and paper money. Report made him out to be the son of John Bull, who every one knows has children in all parts of the world. . . John Bull had christened this son of his by the name of Jonathan; but by and by, when he became a man grown, being a good hearty fellow, about half horse half alligator,[81] his friends and neighbours gave him the nickname of Uncle Sam; a sure sign that they liked him, for I never knew a respectable nickname given to a scurvy fellow in my life. Be this as it may, his family and all his neighbours at last came to call him nothing else but Uncle Sam; and all his beef, pork, and flour, in fact everything that belonged to him, was marked with a huge U. S., six inches long. As I have a great respect for universal example, I shall give him this name in the sequel of my history, which I hereby commend to the special attention of all wise men, more especially the wise men of the east. As to the fools, everybody knows they are so scarce now-a-days, that I hereby snap my fingers and defy them."[82]

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[80] Sketches, p. 165. In her Southern Tour, published in 1831, Mrs. Royall wrote: "Besides the collector [at the custom house, New Orleans], they have . . . 44 clerks, gaugers, inspectors, &c. Most of these were as shabby a set of gawks, as ever disgraced Uncle Sam" (p. 32).

[81] This singular expression, now obsolete or obsolescent, was common in the first half of the nineteenth century. It was originally the slang of the boatmen on the Mississippi and other Western rivers. See C. Schultz, Jr., Travels (1810), II, 145, 146. The *Salem Gazette* of June 12, 1812, a few days before war was declared with England, printed the following: "Curious Terms of Defiance. New-Orleans April 24. '*Half horse half alligator*'—has hitherto been the boast of our up-country boatmen, when quarreling. The present season however has made a complete change. A few days ago two of them quarreled in a boat at Natchez, when one of them jumping ashore declared with a horrid oath that he was a *steamboat*. His opponent immediately followed him, swearing he was an *earthquake* and would shake him to pieces—and in fact almost literally executed his threat." The *Salem Gazette* added "It is these monsters of the western wilds that are forcing the people of the Atlantic shores into an unnecessary and ruinous war" (p. 4–1).

[82] *New York Mirror*, February 19, 1831, VIII, 260, 261. The indefatigable Paulding contributed to the *United States and Democratic Review* for April, 1851, an article called "Uncle Sam and his 'B'hoys,'" from which the following is extracted: "Uncle Sam talks 'big' sometimes, like his old dad, Squire Bull, who was reckoned the greatest bragger of his day, till Uncle Sam grew up and disputed the point with him" (XXVIII, 299).

In 1835 David Crockett wrote:

"Them that danced should pay the piper; but I suppose they will all say as the young man said of the old quaker when the robbers stopped the mail-coach. The old gentleman gave up his purse; the young man held back: a pistol was presented at him: 'Oh,' says he, 'don't shoot; old uncle always pays for me!' So poor old Uncle Sam, I suppose, will pay for all: and I am glad that the funding system has paid off our national debt, so that a few hundreds of thousands won't hurt us much now. General Jackson can pay off the post-office debt as he said he would the old debt, *by borrowing;* and then we'll burn all the books and old extra contracts, and begin *dee novo*, as the Latin scholars say in Congress."[83]

In 1835 Charles J. Latrobe, Australian governor and traveller, remarked:

"You may recollect I mentioned in a former letter, a certain double-barrelled fowling-piece which the commissioner had brought away from a government agent on the Missouri. It had kept us company ever since, going among us generally by the name of 'Uncle Sam,' such was the *soubriquet* given by the Americans to the General Government, from the usual initials U. S. or United States, affixed upon Government property."[84]

In 1835 Edward S. Abdy, an Englishman, observed:

"I mention this trifling circumstance, because it illustrates a striking feature in the national character. 'Uncle Sam' is the veriest slave of habit in existence, and dislikes trouble. He would rather put up with an inconvenience than put himself out of his way."

In a note he added:

"This appellation corresponds with our 'John Bull'; and is supposed to be derived from the initials U. S. As the nation has not yet been able to fix upon a distinctive title, perhaps that of Caucasia would not be inappropriate."[85]

On December 28, 1836, General George A. McCall said: "At the usual hour for the examination of recruits, one bright

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[83] Tour to the North and Down East, p. 202. Uncle Sam had previously figured in the Narrative of the Life of David Crockett (1834), p. 86.

[84] The Rambler in America, I, 160.

[85] Journal of a Residence and Tour in the United States, II, 301.

spring morning, the surgeon and myself having *assembled* in my office high up in Market Street for the purpose I have stated, the sergeant brought, among other candidates for the honor of serving '*Uncle Sam,*' a perfect Hercules in physical Development."[86]

In 1838 there appeared in Bentley's Miscellany a series of articles called Uncle Sam's Peculiarities, from which the following is extracted:

"We must here digress from our immediate subject, for the purpose of properly introducing one of the most celebrated characters now *talked* of. This personage, *Major Jack Downing* by name, is in everybody's notice as a great American jester, but, like *Uncle Sam,* is *but a name.* There may originally have been a Major Jack Downing, a comical 'military' officer, and there may also have been an Uncle Sam in Boston, whose initials happening to be the same as the initial letters of the United States was, from a postmaster, or government contractor of Massachusetts Bay, converted into the impersonation, or great federal representative of the twenty-six States, including Jonathan's own five particular States, New Hampshire, Connecticut, New England, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. But Major Jack and Uncle Sam of Boston (*mortal* Sam) both sleep with their forefathers, if they ever had any, leaving only their names behind; glorious Jack being famous in *story,* and Uncle Sam's initials, U. S., being wedded to *E. Pluribus unum,* for better or worse, until the twenty-six stars of North America shall be separated by some violent effort of nature, or a general convulsion of Yankee Republicanism. But if *Major Jack* is never seen *in propria persona,* he is sometimes represented by others, who prefer his name to their own. One of Mister Joseph Miller's jokes is of a fanatic, who gave thanks for being shown some relicts in a monastery, and added, 'This is the sixteenth head of John the Baptist I have seen in Italy.' A traveller in the United States is reminded of this Joe, and of King Dick's 'six Richmonds in the field,' by hearing of Major Jack Downing of American ubiquity, who is spread abroad and met with as a resident in most of the large towns and many of the quiet villages, and is moreover, one of the most witty correspondents of that many-headed monster, the Public Press. . . . The military are for a minute obstructed by six gaily-painted covered carts filled with merchandise, which their owners, the 'western merchants,' are

[86] Letters from the Frontiers (1868), p. 335. See also p. 354. This is the first use of the term by an army officer that I have noted.

carrying home; one 'fresh spring-water' locomotive from Long Island, an 'American ginger champagne' waggon, and a dirty cart carrying the mail of 'U. S.' (Uncle Sam, or United States)."[87]

In 1839 Marryat wrote:

"I fell in with Major F——, with whom I had been previously acquainted, who informed me that he was about to send a detachment of troops from Green Bay to Fort Winnebago, across the Wisconsin territory. As this afforded me an opportunity of seeing the country, which seldom occurs, I availed myself of an offer to join the party. The detachment consisted of about one hundred recruits, nearly the whole of them Canada patriots, as they are usually called, who, having failed in taking the provinces from John Bull, were fain to accept the shilling from uncle Sam."[88]

Having thus traced the history of Uncle Sam from its inception in 1813 down to 1840, previous to which no example has hitherto been cited, let us now turn our attention to the origin of the term. Three explanations have been advanced. Nearly the entire third page of the Boston *Sunday Herald* of August 9, 1903, was filled with an article and illustrations on the "Nova Scotia Home of Uncle Sam. Origin of his Odd Costume. Sam Slick of Slickville, the Product of Judge Haliburton's Pen, and his Sayings." The writer said: "Strange as it may seem, one must go beyond the borders of the United States to find the birthplace of 'Uncle Sam.' " Then followed a description of Windsor, where Judge Haliburton was born. The notion is apparently based wholly on the pseudonym assumed by Judge Haliburton—"Sam Slick." This newspaper yarn does not, of course, deserve serious consideration, and may be dismissed with the remark that Thomas Chandler Haliburton, having been born December 17, 1796, was less than sixteen years old at the outbreak of the war with England, and that it was not until 1835 that he employed the pseudonym of "Sam Slick."[89]

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[87] Bentley's Miscellany, IV, 43, 294.

[88] Diary in America, II, 42, 43.

[89] The Clockmaker; or the Sayings and Doings of Samuel Slick, of Slickville, first appeared in the columns of the *Nova Scotian* in 1835–1836, and was first published in book form at Halifax in 1837. In a conversation supposed to have taken place

The most popular explanation of the origin of Uncle Sam first appeared in print, so far as I have been able to ascertain, in John Frost's Book of the Navy, published in 1842. It did not originate with Frost, and no doubt he obtained it from a newspaper. It is as follows:[90]

"Origin of 'Uncle Sam.'

"Much learning and research have been exercised in tracing the origin of odd names, and odd sayings, which, taking their rise in some trifling occurrence or event, easily explained or well understood for a time, yet, in the course of years, becoming

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between Edward Everett and Sam Slick, the latter remarked: "Well, I don't know, said I, but somehow or another, I guess you'd found preaching the best speculation in the long run; them are Unitarians pay better than Uncle Sam (we call, said the Clockmaker, the American public Uncle Sam, as you call the British, John Bull)" (The Clockmaker, second edition, Concord, 1838, p. 43).

Mr. Robert G. Haliburton relates this anecdote of Judge Haliburton: "On his arrival in London, the son of Lord Abinger (the famous Sir James Scarlett) who was confined to his bed, asked him to call on his father, as there was a question which he would like to put to him. When he called, his Lordship said, 'I am convinced that there is a veritable Sam Slick in the flesh now selling clocks to the Bluenoses. Am I right?' 'No,' replied the Judge, 'there is no such person. He was a pure accident. I never intended to describe a Yankee clockmaker or Yankee dialect; but Sam Slick slipped into my book before I was aware of it, and once there he was there to stay'" (in Haliburton: a Centenary Chaplet, Toronto, 1897, pp. 25, 26).

[90] Book of the Navy, pp. 297, 298. The story occurs in the "Naval Anecdotes" in the Appendix. Some of the stories and songs in this Appendix appear in the Supplement to *Niles' Register*, 1816, IX; but the Wilson story is not there.

As an illustration of the extraordinary changes undergone in repetition, I give the story as it was printed in 1870 by Brewer in his Dictionary of Phrase and Fable: "Sam. *Uncle Sam.* The United States government. Mr. Frost tells us that the inspectors of Elbert Anderson's store on the Hudson were Ebenezer and his uncle Samuel Wilson, the latter of whom superintended in person the workmen, and went by the name of 'Uncle Sam.' The stores were marked E.A.—U.S. (*Elbert Anderson, United States*), and one of the employers being asked the meaning, said U. S. stood for 'Uncle Sam.' The joke took, and in the War of Independence the men carried it with them, and it became stereotyped" (p. 783).

Brewer goes on to say: "*To stand Sam.* To be made to pay the reckoning. This is an Americanism, and arose from the letters U. S. on the knapsacks of the soldiers. The government of Uncle Sam has to pay or 'stand Sam' for all. (*See above.*)" In 1871 DeVere wrote: "In the army, it seems, even this designation [i. e. Uncle Sam] was deemed too full and formal, and, as early as the year 1827, it became a familiar saying among soldiers, to *stand Sam*, whenever drinks or refreshments of any kind had to be paid for. As they were accustomed to see *Uncle Sam* pay for all their wants, to *stand Sam*, became to their minds equivalent to the ordinary slang phrase: to stand treat" (p. 251). In 1891 J. Maitland said: "Sam, 'to stand Sam' (Amer.), to stand treat" (American Slang Dictionary, p. 229). And in 1891 J. M. Dixon wrote: "Sam.—*To stand Sam*— to entertain friends; to pay for refreshments. U. Sam is a contraction for 'Uncle Sam,' a jocular name for the U. S. Government. The phrase, therefore, originally means to pay all expenses, as the Government does" (Dictionary of Idiomatic English Phrases, p. 282). Brewer's statement, having been adopted by several writers, requires consideration. As

involved in mystery, assume an importance equal at least to the skill and ingenuity required to explain or trace them to their origin. 'The Swan with two necks'—'The Bull and Mouth'—'All my eye, Betty Martin,' and many others, are of this character—and who knows but, an hundred years hence, some 'learned commentator' may puzzle his brain to furnish some ingenious explanation of the origin of the national appellation placed at the head of this article. To aid him, therefore, in this research, I will state the facts as they occurred under my own eye.

"Immediately after the declaration of the last war with England, Elbert Anderson, of New-York, then a Contractor, visited Troy, on the Hudson, where was concentrated, and where he purchased, a large quantity of provisions—beef,

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a matter of fact, not only is the phrase "to stand Sam"—meaning "to be answerable for," "to become surety for," "to pay the reckoning," or "to pay for the drinks," —not an Americanism, but it has never, so far as I know, even been employed in this country. The words "Sam" and "Sammy" have been used in various senses in English dialects for a hundred and thirty years, an instance dated 1777 being recorded in the English Dialect Dictionary. To the examples of "upon my Sam," an expletive, quoted in the same work from Frank's Nine Days (1879), p. 12, and Zack's On Trial (1899), p. 220, may be added another from R. Marsh's Tom Ossington's Ghost (1900), p. 216. "Sammy," meaning "foolish, silly," was recognized as early as 1823 in Pierce Egan's edition of Grose's Classical Dictionary; and examples dated 1837 and 1843 are quoted in Farmer and Henley's Slang and its Analogues (1903). The expression "to stand Sam" or "to stand Sammy" is recognized in Halliwell's Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words (1847), in Wright's Dictionary of Obsolete and Provincial English (1857), in Hotten's Dictionary of Modern Slang, Cant, and Vulgar Words (1859), in Barrère and Leland's Dictionary of Slang, Jargon & Cant (1890), in Farmer and Henley's Slang and its Analogues (1903), and in the English Dialect Dictionary. "Landlady," wrote Moncrieff in 1823, "serve them with a glass of tape, all round; and I'll stand Sammy" (Tom and Jerry, III, 5). Besides this extract, Farmer and Henley quote others from Ainsworth's Rookwood (1834), Hindley's Cheap Jack (1876), Black's White Heather (1885), Henley's Villon's Good-Night (1887), Licensed Victuallers' *Gazette* (1890), and Milliken's 'Arry Ballads (1890); and to these may be added others from *Punch*, August 20, 1881, LXXXI, 75, and from W. De Morgan's Joseph Vance (1906), p. 465. Every known example is from a British author.

During the ascendancy of the Know-Nothing party, however, the word "Sam" was used in this country for a brief period. "The allusion," wrote Farmer in 1889, "is to Uncle Sam, the national sobriquet, the Know Nothings claiming that in a nation mostly made up of immigrants, only native-born citizens should possess and exercise privileges and powers" (Americanisms Old and New, p. 470). "The name," said H. F. Reddall in 1892, "contains, of course, an allusion to 'Uncle Sam,' the personification of the government of the United States" (Fact, Fancy, and Fable, p. 452). A few examples may be given. In a letter dated Randolph, Pennsylvania, July 14, 1855, a correspondent said: "I take it for granted that you are with us heart and hand in the new movement known as 'Know Somethings;' but I believe quite as readily recognized under the Yankee cognomen, 'Jonathan.' The order is fully organized in this State, and is progressing finely. All the secret organizations therefore of this character are blended, and *E. Pluribus Unum.* The 'Sams' are going over *en masse*, and although some of our election returns may be credited to Sam, yet I assure you that all candidates elect are the workmanship of Jonathan.

pork, &c. The inspectors of these articles at that place were Messrs. Ebenezer and Samuel Wilson. The latter gentleman (invariably known as '*Uncle Sam*') generally superintended in person a large number of workmen, who, on this occasion, were employed in overhauling the provisions purchased by the contractor for the army. The casks were marked E. A.—U. S. This work fell to the lot of a facetious fellow in the employ of the Messrs. Wilson, who, on being asked by some of his fellow-workmen the meaning of the mark (for the letters U. S., for United States, were then almost entirely new to them,) said 'he did not know, unless it meant *Elbert Anderson and Uncle Sam*'—alluding exclusively, then, to the said 'Uncle Sam' Wilson. The joke took among the workmen, passed currently; and 'Uncle Sam' himself being present, was occa-

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Sam is dead! Plucked up by the roots! Buried in cotton!" (*Kansas Herald of Freedom*, August 4, 1855, p. 4–3). On February 28, 1856, Congressman Samuel Carruthers wrote: "I went twice (and but twice), into their [Know-Nothing] councils. I 'saw Sam.' It took two visits to see him all over. I made them. I saw enough and determined never to see his face again" (in H. J. Desmond's Know-Nothing Party, 1905, p. 82). In 1858 Governor Wise of Virginia wrote to a committee of the Tammany Society: "As to your other motto—'Civil and Religious Liberty'—ours was saved by the Virginia Democracy in 1855. We struck the dark lantern out of the hands of ineffable Sam, and none now are found so poor as 'hurrah!' for him" (*New York Tribune*, January 11, 1858, p. 2–6). In 1905 H. J. Desmond remarked: "Those inducted into the first degree do not appear to have been informed as to the name of the order. They were brought into 'the august presence of Sam.' . . . In Illinois the Know-Nothing order split into two factions, 'the Sams' insisting upon an anti-Catholic program and 'the Jonathans' proposing not to antagonize Catholics who owed no civil allegiance as distinguished from spiritual allegiance to the Pope. The Jonathans triumphed" (Know-Nothing Party, pp. 54, 103). Exactly what the Know-Nothings meant by "Sam" is not apparent from these extracts; but fortunately the question need not further detain us.

One more statement may be considered here. In 1882 A. S. Palmer remarked: "Sambo, the ordinary nickname for a negro, often mistaken as a pet name formed from *Sam, Samuel*, . . . is really borrowed from his Spanish appellation *zambo*, . . . A connexion was sometimes imagined perhaps with *Uncle Sam*, a popular name for the United States" (Folk-Etymology, pp. 338, 339). It may be doubted whether any one has ever seriously advanced the notion that Sambo is formed from Sam or Samuel, or that there is a connection between Sambo and Uncle Sam. "This *Negre Sambo* comes to me," wrote R. Ligon in 1657, "and seeing the needle wag, desired to know the reason of its stirring" (True & Exact History of the Island of Barbados, pp. 49, 50, 54). Before 1700 we read of "Sambo negro helping caring goods" (New England Historical and Genealogical Register, XXXIV, 98). In the *Boston News-Letter* of October 2, 1704, an advertisement stated that "There is a Negro man taken up . . . calls himself *Sambo*" (p. 2–2). In 1716 "Sambo a negro servant" was married to Hagar (New England Historical and Genealogical Register, XXXVIII, 27). In the *Boston Gazette* of July 22, 1765, "a Negro Man named *Sambo*" was advertised as a runaway (p. 4–3). In the *Massachusetts Spy* of February 17, 1813, we read: "The moan of the poor black man interrupted the sweet song of the mocking bird. We could not distinguish all the voices that rose from the field, but the ear caught a fragment of the poor negro's song:—The lash of the driver forced a scream of anguish that moment from Sambo, and we heard no more" (p. 4–2).

sionally rallied by them on the increasing extent of his possessions.

"Many of these workmen being of a character denominated 'food for powder,' were found shortly after following the recruiting drum, and pushing toward the frontier lines, for the double purpose of meeting the enemy, and of eating the provisions they had lately laboured to put in good order. Their old jokes of course accompanied them, and, before the first campaign ended, this identical one first appeared in print—it gained favour rapidly, till it penetrated and was recognized in every part of our country, and will, no doubt, continue so while the United States remain a nation. It originated precisely as above stated; and the writer of this article distinctly recollects remarking, at the time when it first appeared in print, to a person who was equally aware of its origin, how odd it would be should this silly joke, originating in the midst of beef, pork, pickle, mud, salt, and hoop-poles, eventually become a national cognomen."

This story was introduced by Bartlett into his Dictionary of Americanisms in 1848; was repeated, with variations, by John F. Watson[91] in 1844 and again in 1846; was given,

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[91] Watson's version of 1844 is as follows: "While on this subject, it may be as well to give a passing notice of another national name just growing into common use—we mean the term '*Uncle Sam,*' which first came into use in the time of the last war with England; but the cause of its origin is still unknown to millions of our people. —The name grew out of the letters E. A.—U. S., marked upon the army provisions, barrelled up at Troy, for the contractor, Elbert Anderson, and implied the initials of his name, and U. S. for the United States. In happened that these provisions were inspected there by Samuel Wilson, usually called, among his hired men, '*Uncle Sam.*' One of his workmen, on being asked the meaning of the letters, E. A.—U.S., replied, archly, it meant Elbert Anderson and Uncle Sam—(Wilson). The joke went round merrily among the men, some of whom going afterwards to the frontiers, and there partaking of the very provisions they had assisted to pack and mark, still adhered to calling it Uncle Sam; and as every thing else of the army appointments bore also the letters U. S., Uncle Sam became a ready name, first for all that appertained to the United States, and, finally, for the United States itself—a *cognomen* which is as likely to be perpetuated, as that of John Bull for old England" (Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, II, 335).

Watson's version of 1846 differed slightly from the above: "*Uncle Sam*, is another national appellation applied to us, by ourselves, and which, as it is growing into popular use, and was first used at *Troy*, New York, it may be interesting to explain, to wit: The name grew out of the letters E. A. U. S. marked upon the army provisions, barrelled up at Troy, during the last war with England, under the contract of Elbert Anderson; and implied his name, and U. S. the United States. The inspector of those provisions, was Samuel Wilson, who was usually called by the people, *Uncle Sam.* It so happened that one of the workmen, being asked the meaning of the initials on the casks, &c., waggishly replied, they meant Elbert Anderson and *Uncle Sam*—Wilson. The joke took; and afterwards, when some of the same men were on the frontiers, and saw the same kind of provisions arriving to their use, they would jocosely say, here comes Uncle Sam. From thence it came to pass,

also with variations, by Arthur James Weise[92] in 1876, in 1886, and again in 1891; and is now found in almost every

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that whenever they saw the initials U. S., on any class of stores, they were equally called Uncle Sam's; and finally, it came by an easy transition, to be applied to the United States itself" (Annals and Occurrences of New York City and State, p. 243).

The bibliography of Watson's books on Philadelphia and New York requires a note. In 1830 he published, in one volume, Annals of Philadelphia, being a Collection of Memoirs, Anecdotes & Incidents of the City and its Inhabitants from the Days of the Pilgrim Founders. (Collation: Title, 1 p.; Copyright, 1 p.; Advertisement, pp. iii, iv; Preface, pp. v–vii; Contents, pp. viii–xii; Annals of Philadelphia, pp. 1–740; Appendix: containing Olden Time Researches & Reminiscences, of New York City, pp. 1–78.) In 1832 he published Historic Tales of Olden Time: concerning the Early Settlement and Advancement of New York City and State. In 1833 he published Historic Tales of Olden Time, concerning the Early Settlement and Progress of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania. In 1844 he published, in two volumes, Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, in the Olden Time; being a Collection of Memoirs, Anecdotes, and Incidents of the City and its Inhabitants, and of the Earliest Settlements of the inland part of Pennsylvania, from the Days of the Founders. This work was copyrighted in 1843, though the title page bears the date 1844. In the advertisement, which is dated July, 1842, Watson says: "The reader will please observe, that this work having been *closed in Manuscript*, in 1842, that therefore, all reference to any given number of years back, respecting things passed or done so many '*years ago*,' is to be understood as counting backward *from the year* 1842" (p. xi). In 1846 he published Annals and Occurrences of New York City and State, in the Olden Time. In 1857 he published, in two volumes, Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, in the Olden Time. This edition contains some matter not in the 1844 edition. Finally, in 1877, Willis P. Hazard published, in three volumes, the Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, the first two volumes being identical with the 1857 edition of Watson's work, the third volume an addition by Hazard. The Uncle Sam story first appeared in the 1844 edition of Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania (II, 335); and in the 1846 edition of Annals and Occurrences of New York City and State, in the Olden Time (p. 243), though the two accounts, as seen above, differ somewhat.

[92] In 1876 Mr. Weise gave the following account: "Among the well known citizens of Troy in 1812, was Samuel Wilson. Being one of the first settlers, and besides having a kind and benevolent disposition, he won the esteem and affection of everybody in the village, and was more generally designated as Uncle Sam than by his proper name. It is related that on one occasion his youngest son wandered away from home and was lost. A gentleman found him crying in a strange place, and asked him whose boy he was, and received for an answer, that he was Uncle Sam's boy. By this appellation the father was readily recognized and he was returned to his parents. During the military operations along the northern border in the war of 1812, Samuel and Ebenezer Wilson were engaged in an extensive slaughtering business, employing about one hundred men, and were slaughtering weekly more than one thousand head of cattle. During this year, he and his brother received a contract from Elbert Anderson, Jr., an army contractor, to supply the troops stationed at Greenbush with beef, 'packed in full bound barrels of white oak.' Samuel Wilson was also appointed at this time Inspector of beef for the army, and was accustomed in this line of duty to mark all the barrels of meat passing his inspection with the abbreviated title U. S. of the United States. In the army at the cantonment at Greenbush, there were a number of soldiers who had enlisted in Troy, and to whom 'Uncle Sam' and his business were well known. The beef received from Troy, they always alluded to as Uncle Sam's beef, and the other soldiers without any inquiry began to recognize the letters U. S. as the initial designation of Uncle Sam. A contractor from the northern lines strengthened this impression

book of reference.[93] Before submitting the story to critical examination, let us see who Anderson and the Wilsons were. Elbert Anderson, Jr., of whom we have already caught

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thereafter, when, purchasing a large quantity of beef in Troy, he advertised that he had received a supply of Uncle Sam's beef of a superior quality. The name 'Uncle Sam,' a few only knowing its derivation, became in a little while the recognized familiar designation of the United States, and is now as well known to the world as is the appellation John Bull" (History of the City of Troy, p. 91).

Mr. Weise's version of 1891, differing somewhat from the above, is as follows: "Among the contractors supplying the Army of the North with provisions was Elbert Anderson, jr., who, on October 1st, advertised in the Troy and Albany newspapers for proposals for 'two thousand barrels of prime pork and three hundred barrels of prime beef,' to be delivered to him in the months of January, February, March, and April, at Waterford, Troy, Albany, and New York. Ebenezer and Samuel Wilson, who were then extensively engaged in slaughtering cattle in the village, contracted to furnish him a quantity of beef 'packed in full-bound barrels of white oak.' From time to time they delivered it at the camp at Greenbush, where the soldiers from Troy designated it as 'Uncle Sam's,' implying that it was furnished by Samuel Wilson, whom they and other people of the village were accustomed to call 'Uncle Sam.' The other recruits, thinking that the term was applied to the letters U. S., stamped upon the barrels by the government inspector of beef, began using the appellation 'Uncle Sam' figuratively for the United States, in the same way that the name 'John Bull' is used to designate the English nation" (Troy's One Hundred Years, p. 76).

Mr. Weise also gave the story in his City of Troy and its Vicinity (1886), p. 321.

[93] These of course need not be specified. In the *Boston Daily Advertiser* of April 12, 1902, was printed an article headed "Origin of the Term Uncle Sam. A Story that is Vouched for by Rev. G. F. Merriam—The Original 'Uncle Sam' House." It is in part as follows: "Sterling, Apr. 11.—Rev. G. F. Merriam of Mt. Kisco, N. Y., who is in Sterling as a guest of his son and daughter, told a story of the origin of the term 'Uncle Sam,' as applied to the United States. He said a farm in Mason, N. H., belonging to the estate of Mrs. Persis Wilson, who died recently, and which estate he was engaged in settling, was the birthplace and boyhood home of Uncle Samuel Wilson, who was the original 'Uncle Sam.' The story, vouched for by Rev. Mr. Merriam, . . . is this:—Samuel Wilson was one of a family of 12 children, . . . and he and his younger brother, Edward, located when they were young men, in Albany, N. Y., and at the time of the war of 1812, became extensive contractors for government supplies. They were at this time well known in the vicinity of Albany as 'Uncle Sam' and 'Uncle Ned.' The packages of supplies when sent away to United States government supply depots, were marked 'U.S.,' and people sometimes questioned what those magic letters stood for. They were told that as the packages came from Uncle Sam Wilson, they of course meant 'Uncle Sam,' and from this little thing the name spread, until the government itself was referred to as Uncle Sam. The farm where these men lived as boys, fell into the hands of another brother, Capt. Thomas Wilson, and then to his son, Deacon J. B. Wilson, who died several years since, and his widow, Mrs. Persis Wilson, lived there until her death last winter. Rev. Mr. Merriam was a particular friend of the family, and as executor is attending to the sale of the property. The house contains many relics . . . and many historic articles, the sale of which, Apr. 30, will doubtless attract many of the curiosity hunters. The original 'Uncle Sam' house is standing, although a new house has been erected near by, and everything is to be sold" (p. 4–6). Edward Wilson was older than either Ebenezer or Samuel. A letter addressed in 1902 to the Rev. Mr. Merriam brought no reply.

a glimpse,[94] need not detain us long. The following advertisement appeared in several Albany, Troy, and New York newspapers in 1812 and 1813:

"*Proposals for Beef and Pork.*

"SEALED Proposals will be received through the medium of the Post-Offices at Albany and New-York, directed to the subscriber, until the 25th of October, for 2000 barrels PRIME PORK and 3000 barrels PRIME BEEF, to be delivered in the months of January, February, March and April, at Waterford, Troy, Albany and New-York. The whole to be put up *in full bound barrels* of white oak. No proposals need be offered for less than one hundred barrels. 20 per cent will be paid in advance at the time of executing the contract, 20 per cent on the first day of January, and 20 per cent the first day of March, the remainder on the first day of May, 1813. The Contractor reserves to himself the privilege of choosing his inspector in the counties the provisions are put up in—The preference will be given to those whose reputation and security will insure the faithful compliance of the terms of the contract.

"ELBERT ANDERSON, Jun.

"October 1st, 1812. *Army Contractor.*"[95]

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[94] See p. 32, note 47, above.

[95] *Albany Gazette*, October 5, 1812, p. 3–5. The same advertisement appeared in the *Troy Post*, of October 6, p. 3–4, of October 13, p. 3–4, and of October 20, pp. 3–4; and in the *New York Herald* of January 23, 1813, p. 4–4, though in the last the advertisement was dated October 17.

I have noted several other referenees to Anderson. In the *New York Evening Post* of October 10, 1812, appeared the following: "☞Col. Mapes and the officers under his command, in behalf of their men, return thanks to Elbert Anderson, Junr. Esq. for his liberal present of 100 bushels of Potatoes, 2 boxes of Chocolate, and 1 box of Tea—also, a waggon load of Potatoes from Saml. Hobart and Stephen Striker, on behalf of the inhabitants of Gravesend; . . . " (p. 2–5). In the *Albany Gazette* of Deeember 24, 1812, was printed a letter from Anderson himself (p. 3–4):

"*Messrs. Websters and Skinners,*

"A statement having appeared in your paper, purporting to be the substance of a declaration made by Col Thorn, that 'two or three thousand barrels of provisions have been deposited within a mile and a half of the Canada line.' As that statement may mislead the public and invite the enemy to encroachments, I beg leave to state thro your paper, that there is not more provisions deposited or left near the line than is sufficient for the subsistenee of the men there stationed for the winter: the surplus being removed, to my certain knowledge, to Burlington, and other places of presumed safety, and I believe the same care and prudent precaution has been taken as respeets the munitions of war that were at Champlain.

"ELBERT ANDERSON, Jun.

"*Albany, Dec.* 19, 1812. *Army Contractor.*"

On November 23, 1757, Edward Wilson, said to have been born July 6, 1734,[96] at West Cambridge (now Arlington), Massachusetts, married Lucy Francis of Medford.[97] At West Cambridge were born Ebenezer Wilson on August 18, 1763, and Samuel Wilson on September 13, 1768. About 1780 Edward Wilson took his family to Mason, New Hampshire, and later he went to Troy.[98] Ebenezer and Samuel Wilson removed to Troy about 1789 and soon became prominent in the life of the young town. In September, 1805, the following advertisement appeared in Troy newspapers:

"SLAUGHTERING & PACKING

"The undersigned having two large and convenient SLAUGHTER-HOUSES, beg leave to acquaint their customers and others, that they will be enabled to *kill, cut* and *pack* 150 head of Cattle per day; and, from their local situation, pledge themselves to accommodate those who may favour them with a call, on terms as low as can be obtained in the State.

"They have on hand a large supply of BARRELS and SALT, which will be disposed of on the lowest terms.

"All those who shall be under the necessity of waiting 24 hours for their Cattle to be slaughtered, shall have them pastured free of expence.

E. & S. WILSON.

"*Troy, September* 17, 1805."[99]

In the *Troy Post* of October 6, 1812, appeared this paragraph, which may or may not refer to the Wilsons:

"We are informed that one house in this town has paid Twenty Thousand Dollars during the last month for transporting provisions, flour, whiskey, &c from this place to Plattsburgh, for the use of the army of the North" (p. 3–3).

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[96] This statement is made in J. B. Hill's History of Mason (1858), p. 209; but there is no record of his birth in the Vital Records of Arlington (1904).

[97] Lucy Francis was born March 12, 1738–39 (Vital Records of Medford, 1907, p. 60), and died at Mason, December 8, 1835.

[98] For the Wilsons, see, besides the books by Mr. Weise cited above, Hill's History of Mason, p. 209; Cutter's History of Arlington (1880), p. 323; Vital Records of Arlington, pp. 47, 157. Edward and Lucy Wilson had thirteen children.

[99] *Northern Budget*, September 17, 1805, p. 3–4; September 24, p. 4–1; October 1, p. 4–2. The same advertisement, except that the date was changed to September 24, appeared in the *Troy Gazette* of September 24, 1805, p. 3–4.

In the same paper of June 1, 1813, under the head of "HOGS——wanted," was printed this advertisement:

"BOARDMAN, MANN & Co. wish to purchase One Hundred and Twenty thrifty Barrow SHOTES, for which Cash will be paid on delivery at their Stillhouse in Troy. For further particulars inquire at the store of WILSON, MANN & Co." (p. 2–1).

In the *Troy Post* of September 28, 1813 (p. 3–4), appeared the following:

"NOTICE

"The Copartnership of the subscribers, under the firm of Wilson, Mann & Co. is by mutual Consent this day dissolved. All persons indebted to, or that have any demands against said firm are requested to call on James Mann for settlement, who is duly authorized to settle the same.

"EBENEZER WILSON
"JAMES MANN
"SAMUEL WILSON

"Troy, Sept 28, 1813.

"N. B. The Business in future will be conducted by James Mann at the store lately occupied by Wilson, Mann & Co."[100]

Edward Wilson, the father of the two brothers, died at Troy, June 17, 1816; but neither the Troy nor the Albany papers contained an obituary notice.[101] Ebenezer Wilson died July 22, 1825, the following notice appearing in the New York *Commercial Advertiser:*

"New York, Saturday, July 23.

"Died—Suddenly, yesterday afternoon, Mr. Ebenezer Wilson, Sen. aged 63. Mr. W. has for years been extensively engaged in business as an inspector and packer of Beef both in Troy,

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[100] The notice was repeated in the *Troy Post* of October 12, 19, and 26. The business of the firm was dry goods and groceries. In spite of the dissolution of partnership, the advertisement of Wilson, Mann & Co., dated May 7, 1813, appeared in the *Troy Post* of October 12, 1813.

James Mann, who continued the business, was a son of Benjamin Mann of Keene, New Hampshire. Several years ago I had a correspondence with Mrs. Louise Benson, a descendant of Benjamin Mann. Mrs. Benson merely spoke of the existence in her family of the tradition about the Wilson story, but was unable to give me any new facts.

[101] The *Troy Post* of June 17, 1817, (p. 3–3), contained a notice of the marriage on June 9 of Elizabeth Wilson, a daughter of Ebenezer Wilson, and the Rev. James Ogilvie of New York.

and this city. He was an ornament to the christian church, and a worthy, industrious, and excellent man in all the duties of life."[102]

In the Troy Directory (I, 61) for 1829, the first published, is found this entry: "Wilson, Samuel, ferry continued,"—which, Miss Jessie F. Wheeler writes me,[103] "means, I suppose, Ferry Street continued up the hill." Samuel Wilson died at Troy on July 31, 1854. Of the many notices which appeared in the Troy papers, the following, signed "Trojan," is the most interesting:

"DEATH OF THE LATE SAMUEL WILSON.

"When an individual passes from us, who has been long known, and whose business connections have been very extensive, it is proper that some thing more than a mere passing notice should be taken of his death, as well as a just allusions [*sic*] to some of the principal acts of his life. The subject of this brief notice was an early pioneer in the settlement of this place, commencing in 1793, and he took an active part in the extension of all the business facilities adopted by himself and his associates, and was himself engaged in, and prosecuted successfully, at least four distinct kinds of business, employing about 200 hands constantly, while he took the over-sight of each particular branch, in connection with his brother Eben.—He prosecuted the mercantile business in connection with slooping; the brick-making business very extensively; the distillery business; farming, on a pretty large scale, and the slaughtering business on an extensive plan. During the war of 1812 he supplied the army very generally, especially at the north, from his extensive yards. His tact for managing laborers

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[102] Quoted in the *Troy Sentinel*, July 26, 1825, p. 3–4. Mr. Barton kindly sent me the same notice copied from the *Albany Argus* of July 29, 1825. In his Collections on the History of Albany, published in 1867, Joel Munsell quoted (II, 479), under the head of "Beef Packing in Albany," an article taken from *Knickerbocker* containing this passage: "In 1830 Albany was not only a great cattle packing centre, but the same was true of Troy, Waterford, Lansingburgh and Catskill. Uncle Eb. Wilson was at Catskill; Perry and Judson at Albany; C. P. Ives, Lansingburgh; and Capt. Turner at Batestown, near Troy." When this passage was written it is impossible to say, as Munsell does not specify the volume or date of *Knickerbocker*, a magazine which began publication in 1833. As, however, the writer specifies the year 1830, it is certain that his "Uncle Eb. Wilson" was not identical with our Ebenezer Wilson; but the coincidence in name is worth recording.

[103] In the library of our Society and in that of the New York Historical Society I have found various Troy and Albany newspapers, but those files were very incomplete. At my request, Miss Wheeler of the Troy Public Library searched for me the files owned by that library; and I am indebted to her for several valuable and interesting extracts.

was very peculiar; he would always say 'Come boys,' instead of 'go,' and thereby secured a greater amount of labor than ordinary men.—His success in business he mainly attributed to a strict *system* in his plans, and the constant habit of *early rising*, and to this habit he undoubtedly owed his uniform good health, and his useful life. He had eight brothers and two sisters all of whom were tenacious of this habit, and all but two are now dead, but their ages averaged full 80 years each. In his political creed he was strictly *Republican* and was warmly attached to the Democratic party, and in the election of General Jackson to the Presidency, he took a very active part, serving as a *standing chairman* of the party both at his first and second election. In his religious creed he was tolerant to all. He was united to no church, but at the age of three score years his mind became deeply imbued with religion, and feeling his responsibility to his Maker, he solemnly dedicated himself to God and united with the Presbyterian Church in this city.—His walk and conversation since the solemn transition, evinced the sincerity of his profession, and he has left a pleasing assurance both to the church and his friends that he now 'Rests from his labors and his works follow him.'"[104]

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[104] *Troy Daily Budget*, August 2, 1854, p. 2–3. Other notices of Samuel Wilson appeared in the Troy papers.

"☞ Died—SAMUEL WILSON, aged eighty eight years, died this morning at his residence 76 Ferry street. The deceased was one of the oldest inhabitants of this city. He came to Troy about the year 1793, and consequently had resided here 61 years. He was about the last of those termed 'first settlers.' Mr. W. purchased the lands east of the city, now owned by Messers. VAIL and WARREN, and occupied by them for farming purposes till about 1820. He then sold them all, except about four acres, upon which his present residence stands. He has been one of the most active business men of the community, and we can truly say that he was an honest and upright man" (*Troy Daily Times*, July 1, p. 2–3).

"☞ Samuel B. Wilson, another of our oldest citizens, died at his residence on Ferry st. hill this morning. He was about 80 or 90 years of age" (*Troy Daily Budget*, July 1, p. 2–4). "B." is evidently a printer's error.

"☞ *Samuel Wilson*, aged 88, died yesterday morning at his residence 76 Ferry street. Mr. Wilson was one of the oldest inhabitants of the city" (*Troy Daily Traveller*, August 1, p. 2–2).

"Died. On Monday Morning, Samuel Wilson, in the 88th year of his age. His relatives and friends are respectfully invited to attend his funeral this (Tuesday) afternoon at 3 o'clock, at his late residence, No. 76 Ferry-st." (*Troy Daily Traveller*, August, 1, p. 2–4).

"Died. In this city, July 31, Mr. Samuel Wilson, aged 88 years. Funeral services will be held this (Tuesday) afternoon at 3 o'clock, at his late residence, 76 Ferry st." (*Troy Daily Whig*, August 1, p. 2–6). The hasty burial may have been due to the fact that cholera was then raging in Troy. See *Troy Daily Traveller*, August 2 and 4.

It will be observed that in the above notices, written for the Troy papers, there is no allusion to the Uncle Sam story. In the Albany *Evening Journal* of August 1, 1854, appeared the following, which I copy from the *New York Tribune* of August 4: "'Uncle Sam.'—The death of Samuel Wilson, an aged, worthy and formerly

Before returning to the story related by Frost, there is one further piece of evidence to be presented. Under date of Albany September 17, 1812, was printed in the *Albany Gazette* in September and October of that year an advertisement which was in part as follows:

"*SLAUGHTERING & INSPECTION.*

"WILSON and KINNICUT, take this method to inform their friends and the public in general, that they have made considerable improvements in their Slaughter House in Albany, where they will put up Beef and Pork on as reasonable terms as any body in the state."[105]

While I have been unable to identify the members of this firm of Wilson and Kinnicut, the advertisement is of interest; and it is certain that there was a Wilson family

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enterprising citizen of Troy, will remind those who were familiar with incidents of the War of 1812, of the origin of the popular subriequet [*sic*] for the 'United States.' Mr. Wilson, who was an extensive packer, had the contract for supplying the northern army with beef and pork. He was everywhere known and spoken of as 'Uncle Sam,' and the 'U.S.' branded on the heads of barrels for the army were at first taken to be the initials for 'Uncle Sam' Wilson, but finally lost their local significance and became, throughout the army, the familiar term for 'United States.' The Wilsons were among the earliest and most active citizens of Troy. 'Uncle Sam,' who died yesterday, was 84 years old" (p. 3–6).

The same notice was printed in the *Troy Daily Budget* of August 2, p. 3–3; and in the *Troy Daily Whig* of August 3, p. 3–2. In the New England Historical and Genealogical Register for October, 1854, was printed the following: "WILSON, Mr. Samuel, Troy, N. Y. 31 July, æ. 88. It was from this gentleman that the United States received the name of *Uncle Sam*. It came in this way,—Mr. Wilson had extensive contracts for supplying the army with pork and beef, in the war of 1812. He was then familiarly known as *Uncle Sam* Wilson. His brand upon his barrels was of course U. S. The transition from United States to *Uncle Sam* was so easy, that it was at once made, and the name of the packer of the U. S. provisions was immediately transferred to the government, and became familiar, not only throughout the army, but the whole country" (VIII, 377).

[105] *Albany Gazette*, September 24, 1812, p. 1–1; October 12, p. 1–1. The Troy papers of September and October, 1812, have been searched in vain for this advertisement. It is of course possible that the Wilson of the firm of Wilson and Kinnicut of Albany was Samuel Wilson of Troy, but it would be rash to assert their identity.

The name Kinnicut does not appear in the Albany Directory for 1813, the first published. An advertisement dated July 9, 1805, in regard to "Fresh goods just received by Pierce & Kinnicut," was printed in the *Troy Northern Budget* of September 3, 1805 (p. 1–3); and in a previous issue of the same paper occurred the name of Robert S. Kinnicut. A notice, dated December 14, 1815, of the dissolution by mutual consent of partnership of the firm of R. S. Kinnicut and Zebina Sturtevant was printed in the *Albany Register* of June 7, 1816, (p. 1–3). In the Albany Directory for 1813 appeared the name of "Sturdivant, Zebina, grocer" (Munsell's Annals of Albany, 1854, V. 89).

in Albany and that one or more members of it were named Samuel.[106]

If we compare the facts as brought out in these extracts with the story as related by Frost, it must be acknowledged that in many respects the latter is not inconsistent with the former. It has been proved that Anderson was a contractor; that Ebenezer and Samuel Wilson owned a slaughtering establishment; and that Ebenezer Wilson at least was an inspector.[107] If absolute proof is lacking that the Wilsons received contracts for the supply of beef, that Samuel Wilson was an inspector, and that Samuel Wilson was commonly called "Uncle Sam" Wilson, yet these statements are so extremely probable that their truth may well be conceded.[108] Moreover, the story is plausible and there is no *a priori* objection to be raised against it.

On the other hand, certain facts militate strongly against the story. First, the nickname Uncle Sam, so far from springing into existence at the outbreak of the war, did not make its appearance until the war was half over. Secondly, the absence of any trace of the story until 1842—or a generation after the event—is ominous. Thirdly, a remarkable feature of the obituary notices of Samuel Wilson which were written for the Troy newspapers deserves to be dwelt upon. Not one of them connected Samuel Wilson with Uncle Sam. It is true that the Uncle Sam story is found in two Troy papers, but in each case it was copied from an Albany paper.[109] This fact, coupled with the

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[106] The Albany Directory for 1813 contained the names of Ishmael Wilson, laborer; Newman Wilson, teamster; Samuel Wilson, potter; and widow Martha Wilson, teacher. Samuel Wilson was a constable in the Second Ward. (Munsell's Annals of Albany, V. 47, 97.). Mrs. Jane Wilson, wife of Samuel Wilson, globe manufacturer, died May 8, 1827. (Munsell's Annals of Albany, 1856, VII, 124.) Samuel Wilson, of the firm of James Wilson & Son, died at Schodack on August 29, 1830. (Munsell's Annals of Albany, 1858, IX, 215).

[107] See the obituary notice of Ebenezer Wilson, p. 55, above.

[108] I am indebted to Mr. Weise for courteous replies to several queries. He writes me: "The fact that the Wilsons received contracts for the supply of beef to the troops encamped at the cantonment at Greenbush, and that Samuel Wilson was an inspector, together with the information respecting the sites of the Wilson slaughtering houses in Troy, I obtained from old inhabitants of Troy intimately acquainted with the two brothers." Mr. Weise adds that the notes taken by him when preparing his various books on Troy are stored and so are inaccessible at present.

[109] See p. 57, note 104, above.

further fact that no book about Troy contained the story until 1876, seems to indicate that the popular story is not native to Troy.[110] Fourthly, the statement that "the letters U. S., for United States, were then almost entirely new," is not only so preposterous as to be beyond belief, but can be proved to be untrue. As a matter of fact, the abbreviations U. S. or U. States, as also G. B. or G. Britain, were common early in the nineteenth century;[111] and it would no more have been possible for men in 1813 to ask the meaning of the letters U. S. than would such an inquiry be possible now. Fifthly, the early evidence, while it may not be absolutely conclusive, not only fails to corroborate the Wilson story but strongly points to another conclusion; while the earliest known example of Uncle Sam is from a Troy paper, but *without* reference to Samuel Wilson. Sixthly,

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[110] See The Trojan Sketch Book, edited by Miss Abba A. Goddard (1846); Hunt's Merchants Magazine for June, 1846, XIV, 515–523; D. O. Kellogg's City of Troy (1847); Hunt's Merchants Magazine for September, 1849, XXI, 298–305; John Woodworth's Reminiscences of Troy (1853, second edition in 1860). Mr. Weise's History of the City of Troy was published in 1876.

[111] "The army of the U.S." (*Salem Gazette*, January 21, 1812, p. 3–2). "An ambitious president . . . might march the militia . . . out of the U. S. and keep the whole of the regular force within" (*Connecticut Courant*, January 22, 1812, p. 3–4). "The Gull Traps which are now set through the U. States" (*Columbian Centinel*, February 19, 1812, p. 2–2). "Equipped at the expense of the U.S." (*Salem Gazette*, July 31, 1812, p. 3–2). "The army of the U.S." (*Yankee*, August 21, 1812, p. 3–2). "Which cost the U.S. five dollars to transport to Greenbush" (*Columbian Centinel*, September 26, 1812, p. 2–2). "War . . . between the U.S. and G.B." (*Columbian Centinel*, December 19, 1812, p. 2–3). "Four regiments of U.S. troops" (*Columbian Centinel*, December 26, 1812, p. 2–3). "The enemies of the U. States" (*New York Spectator*, January 9, 1813, p. 2–5). "The President of the U. States" (*National Intelligencer*, January 12, 1813, p. 3–1). "The U. S. Senate" (*New York Spectator*, February 11, 1813, p. 1–1). "What shall we say of her conduct during the present war with the U.S.?" (*National Intelligencer*, April 3, 1813, p. 3–4). "A regiment of U. S. troops" (*Columbian Centinel*, June 16, 1813, p. 2–4). "The Navy of the U.S." (*Yankee*, July 23, 1813, p. 3–1). "U.S. Law" (*New England Palladium*, August 31, 1813, p. 1–1). "Gen. Varnum, . . . (whose recent votes in the U.States' Senate shew, that he is beginning to reflect)" (*New England Palladium*, September 3, 1813). All these citations, which could be multiplied indefinitely, are of an earlier date than the first appearance of Uncle Sam. A few instances previous to 1812 may be given. "Major Rice of Hingham, we are informed, is appointed a Colonel in the U.S. army" (*Columbian Centinel*, October 27 1798, p. 2–4). "The President of the U. States" (*Columbian Centinel*, March 20, 1799, p. 2–2). "Christopher Gore, Esq. Commissioner of the U. S. at the Court of London" (*Columbian Centinel*, March 20, 1799, p. 2–4). "The President of the U.S." (*Columbian Centinel*, March 14, 1807, p. 2–3). But while, as thus seen, the initials U. S. were perfectly familiar to Americans in 1812 and 1813, yet no doubt the war with England made them still more common. Attention may also be called to the example of "U.Sam" quoted on p. 37, above.

the apparent fact that the nickname was at first used somewhat derisively does not tend to confirm the popular yarn.

Finally, in connection with the Wilson story, we must consider a stanza in a song said to have been sung about 1789. Much has been written about "the original Yankee Doodle song." The song thus generally spoken of begins with the line "Father and I went down to camp." In Act I, Scene III, of Andrew Barton's "The Disappointment: Or, The Force of Credulity: A New American Comic Opera," printed in 1767, the air of Yankee Doodle made its first known appearance under that name.[112] When the British troops arrived at Boston in 1768 it was stated, under date of September 29 of that year, that "the Yankey Doodle Song was the Capital Piece in their Band of Music;"[113] and, much to the annoyance of the good people of Boston, the British persisted in playing the air at intervals for another seven years. As the "Father and I" song was written not earlier than 1775, obviously it could not have been "the original" Yankee Doodle song. In 1824, J. Farmer and J. B. Moore, believing that "the burlesque song...is passing into oblivion," gave "a copy of the song as it was printed thirty-five years since, and as it was troll'd in our Yankee circles of that day."[114] As printed by Farmer and Moore, the song had eleven stanzas, the tenth being as follows:

"Old uncle Sam. *come* there to change
Some pancakes and some onions,
For *lasses cakes*, to carry home
To give his wife and young ones."

That this version was actually printed in 1789 rests upon the assertion of Farmer and Moore. This Society owns a copy of "The Yankey's Return from Camp" which was

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[112] Page 22. A copy of the opera in the Ridgway branch of the Library Company of Philadelphia has written in ink on the title page, "by Col. Thomas Forrest of Germantown. S." Who "S." was, I do not know. John F. Watson also stated that "Mr. Forrest wrote a very humorous play, (which I have seen printed)" (Annals of Philadelphia, 1830, p. 232).

[113] *New York Journal*, October 13, 1768, p. 2-2.

[114] Collections, Historical and Miscellaneous; and Monthly Literary Journal, III, 158, 159.

probably printed in 1813.[115] The Boston Public Library owns a copy, entitled "The Farmer and his Son's return from a visit to the Camp,"[116] which I believe to be earlier[117] than the version in the library of this Society. In 1857 it was stated that "the verses commencing 'Father and I went down to camp,' were written by a gentleman of Connecticut, a short time after Gen. Washington's last visit to New England."[118] Now this visit was made in 1789, and, curiously enough, it was in that very year that Royall Tyler's play of "The Contrast" was acted; and in that play, published in 1790, the words made their earliest known appearance in print.[119] The stanza quoted above is first

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[115] It is in a collection of Songs, Ballads, etc., in three volumes, presented to the Society by Isaiah Thomas in August, 1814, and stated by him to have been "Purchased from a Ballad Printer and Seller, in Boston, 1813. Bound up for Preservation—to shew what the articles of this kind are in vogue with the Vulgar at this time, 1814." In 1903 the Rev. Dr. Edward Everett Hale printed this version in his New England History in Ballads, pp. 116-120.

[116] My attention was called to this in 1901 by Mr. Worthington C. Ford, who kindly sent me a blue print of it. As the library officials have for years been unable to find the volume containing the original, my blue print is valuable. The title, and the fact that at the top of the broadside is a cut of a drummer and three soldiers, make me think that this version is older than the other.

[117] By earlier, I merely mean that it was printed earlier. The words of the two versions are practically identical.

[118] Historical Magazine, I, 92.

[119] The Contrast, Act III, Scene i, p. 45. For purposes of comparison, I give the first stanza. Tyler has it:

"Father and I went up to camp,
Along with Captain Goodwin;
And there we saw the men and boys,
As thick as hasty-pudding."

The version owned by this Society reads:

"Father and I went down to camp,
Along with Captain Gooding,
And there we see the men and boys,
As thick as hastypudding."

The Farmer and Moore version is as follows:

"Father and I went down to camp,
Along with Captain Goodwin,
Where we *see* the men and boys
As thick as Hasty-*puddin.*"

It is of course possible that my blue print is earlier than 1789, but its date is purely conjectural.

Dr. Hale writes: "An autograph note of Judge Dawes, of the Harvard class of 1777, addressed to my father, says that the author of the well-known lines was Edward Bangs, who graduated with him." It is curious that some (but not all) of the lines should have first been printed in a play written by a member of the Harvard class of 1776.

found in the version of 1824 and is not in either of the three versions certainly printed in or before 1813. Hence we cannot, without better evidence, accept the Farmer and Moore stanza as antedating 1824. Yet it is perfectly possible that the stanza was written before the war of 1812,[120] and if it was, the fact would seem to be all but fatal to the Wilson story.

The third explanation of the origin of Uncle Sam is that the sobriquet was merely a jocular extension of the letters U. S. This explanation, like the Wilson story, rests purely on assumption. There is nothing in the least either unusual or remarkable in the process of abbreviating a term and then expanding it. In the amenities of political warfare in this country in 1855, it was considered the height of wit to dub a politician "D. D." and then expand the initials into something derogatory. In this way John Petitt became "Dirty Dog," Stephen A. Douglas became "Debauched Douglas," and David R. Atchison became "Drunken Davy."[121] During the same period in England, we find the same manifestation. The London Transport Corps Regiment, which was formed in 1854 and 1855 for service in the Crimea, went by the nickname of the "London Thieving Company." When its name was changed in 1857 to Military Train, it was dubbed "Murdering Thieves," "Muck Tumblers," "Muck Train," and "Moke Train,"—the third a corruption of the last, said to have been due to the employment of Spanish mules instead of horses.[122]

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[120] In a song called Brother Jonathan, doubtless written in 1798, when war with France was thought imminent, and printed in 1800 in The Nightingale; or Rural Songster (Dedham), p. 118, is found this stanza:

> "I think it's darned wrong, be sure,
> Because we us'd 'em clever;
> An' uncle vums a sailor works
> Much harder than a weaver."

Throughout the war of 1812, song after song was written to the air of Yankee Doodle.

[121] An article headed "The D.D.'s," which was printed in the *Kansas Herald of Freedom* of August 25, 1855, begins as follows: "The *Missouri Democrat* has a very fine article under this head. It says the politicians have lately taken upon themselves the liberty of conferring the degree of D.D. upon its voters with a most promiscuous irreverence" (p. 2–3). It states that Thomas H. Benton was responsible for the nicknames applied to Petitt and Douglas.

[122] Notes and Queries, Ninth Series, V, 380, 439 (May 12, June 2, 1900); Tenth Series, VII, 257 (March 30, 1907).

I can well remember how, as a boy, I used to wonder whether General Grant had actually been christened U. S. and whether those letters stood for the United States. I have since learned that Grant was called not only "United States" Grant, but also "Uncle Sam" Grant, "Unconditional Surrender" Grant, and "United we Stand" Grant.[123] During the past decade the South African War has enabled us to observe these nicknames in the very making. A London newspaper of January 14, 1900, asserted that "by a facetious adaptation of initials as Roman numerals [C. I.V.], the City of London Imperial Volunteers, now on their way to the front, achieve the title of the 104th, an appellation likely to commend itself to the regiment."[124] Nicknames have a way of disappearing rapidly, but this particular one seems to have stuck.[125] But it was by no means the only one in which the C. I. V. rejoiced. Those who opposed the war invented "Chamberlain's Innocent Victims," while Tommy Atkins converted the initials into "Can I Venture?" A more unpleasant nickname was "Covered In Vermin."[126] The Imperial Yeomanry were collectively called "Innocent Youths."[127]

Does the history of the term Uncle Sam, now given for the first time, tend to support or to overthrow this explanation of the origin of the sobriquet? While the initials U. S. were well known in 1812 and 1813, yet no doubt the war made them still more common. "The letters U. S.," explained the *Troy Post* of September 7, 1813, "on the government waggons, &c are supposed to have given rise

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[123] See W. F. G. Shanks's Personal Recollections of distinguished Generals (1866), p. 117.

[124] *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, quoted in Notes and Queries, Ninth Series, V. 104 (February 10, 1900).

[125] Notes and Queries, Ninth Series, X, 503 (December 27, 1902).

[126] Notes and Queries, Ninth Series, X, 503 (December 27, 1902).

[127] Notes and Queries, Ninth Series, X, 503 (December 27, 1902).

By a still further exercise of humor, an article in an English journal on the London "Bobby" is headed "Robert Again" (Black and White, July 25, 1903, XXVI, 110); while the London *Times* converts Tommy Atkins into "Mr. Thomas Atkins." Similarly, Uncle Sam becomes Uncle Samuel, of which an instance dated 1816 has already been given. (See p. 41, above.) "Our good Uncle Samuel," wrote General Randolph B. Marcy in 1872 (Border Reminiscences, p. 66). A letter which appeared in the *Philadelphia Aurora* of October 14, 1812, was signed "Johannes Taurus" (p. 1–1).

to it."[128] On October 1, 1813, a writer spoke of "Uncle Sam, the now popular explication of the U. S."[129] By implication it may be inferred that this was the view of Paulding in 1831,[130] of Abdy in 1835,[131] and of an unknown Englishman in 1838.[132] It was stated at the beginning of this paper that the history of nicknames usually follows one general course,—that those who, at the time of origin, perhaps know the real explanation do not record it, and that later people begin guessing. Must it not be admitted that Uncle Sam is an exception to the rule? that those who first used the sobriquet did record its origin? and that the explanation they gave is the true explanation?

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[128] See p. 33, above.
[129] See p. 34, above.
[130] See p. 43, above.
[131] See p. 44, above.
[132] See p. 45, above.

It need hardly be pointed out that the word "uncle" has long been employed in this country. In a play written in 1815, David Humphreys made Doolittle, the Yankee hero, thus soliloquize about the Countess St. Luc, another character in the play: "I like her tu; though she is so tarnation strange and sad, by what I larnt jest now. She's quite a decent, clever woman—ladyship, I shood say; about as nice and tidy a crittur as ever trod shews'-leather. (*Looking at the glass as he passes, and admiring himself*) Well! my fortin's made. I woodn't give that (*snapping his fingers*) to call the *President* and all the *Congress* '*Uncle!*' Why, I am as fine as a fiddle" (Act I, p. 39). On September 3, 1838, Hawthorne said: "The Revolutionary pensioners come out into the sunshine to make oath that they are still above ground. One, whom Mr. S——— saluted as 'Uncle John,' went into the bar-room, walking pretty stoutly by the aid of a long, oaken staff" (American Note-Books, 1883, I, 190). In 1853 Lowell wrote: "'Do you think it will rain?' With the caution of a veteran *auspex*, he evaded a direct reply. 'Wahl, they *du* say it's a sign o' rain comin', said he. I discovered afterwards that my interlocutor was Uncle Zeb. Formerly, every New England town had its representative uncle. He was not a pawnbroker, but some elderly man who, for want of more defined family ties, had gradually assumed this avuncular relation to the community"(Mooschead Journal, Prose Works, 1890, I, 16). The *Salem Gazette* of June 13, 1815, contained a paragraph headed, "The Cogitations of Uncle John" (p. 3–2). It has already been pointed out that Timothy Pickering was nicknamed "Uncle Tim," See p. 26, above.

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